University of Alberta

Shevchenko's Literary Shamanism

by

George Berthold Hawrysch ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Ukrainian Literature

Department of Slavic and East European Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1997

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-22993-9

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: George Berthold Hawrysch

Title of Thesis: Shevchenko's Literary Shamanism

Title: Doctor of Philosophy

Year this Degree Granted: 1997

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly, or scientific purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

Date 02/IX/97

G. Hawrysch

16 Indian Road Crescent,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Shevchenko's Literary Shamanism* submitted by George Berthold Hawrysch in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Ukrainian Literature.

B Medwidsky
Bohdan Medwidsky, chairman

Oleh S. Ilnytzkyj, supervisor

Milan V. Dimic
Milan Dimic

John-Paul Himka
John-Paul Himka

Uri Margolin

Natalia Pylypiuk
Natalia Pylypiuk

Date: Aug. 27, 1997

B Medwidsky
for George S. N. Luckyj, external reader

Note

The inclusive, sex-neutral pronoun "he" will be employed in constructions having the grammatical antecedent "shaman" except in cases where the sex/gender of the specific shaman being referenced is fixed and known to be female/feminine. ("Sex" will be understood as a biological category supporting the dichotomy or continuum "male-female," as distinct from "gender," which will be understood as a cultural category supporting the dichotomy or continuum "masculine-feminine.") Besides being trite, stylistically graceless, and conceptually unhelpful, the construction "he or she" is avoided on technical grounds. One defining characteristic of practicing shamans is their propensity to enter and leave transsexual or transgendered phases, as well as epicene ones, often without notice. Additionally, a significant number of cultures tender only female shamans. Thus automatically assigning the disjunctive pronominal choice in abstract or generalized discourse is not likely to be dependably accurate.

This one exception apart, the present essay follows guidelines set forth in current manuals of non-sexist usage and style wherever doing so does not compromise veracity.

ABSTRACT

Shevchenko's meta-literary status as prophet and spiritual avatar for a large subset of his readers is the consequence of a shamanic modality in his texts. This modality exhibits extensive commonalities with the formal shamanic practices described by cultural and medical anthropology: trance journey, various trans-rational cognitive states, and ritualized discourses of healing. It resides in identifiable verbal constructions, and is a function of Shevchenko's own transitions between pairs of strongly opposed social, intellectual, and emotional states — states which mirrored the psychic conditions and identity-stabilizing processes of the incipient Ukrainian national self-awareness of the nineteenth century.

Literary shamanism in Shevchenko finds expression as a set of discernable textual patterns: thematic strategies, select topoi, collocations, imagery, and recurring sequences of these. More overtly, the poems contain undisguised descriptions of manifestly shamanic activities such as dream-flying, communion with personalized forces of nature as a prelude to writing, spirit-familiars, and detailed descriptions of the poet's own shamanic "initiation."

It can be shown that the poet was aware of being a literary mediator between standard and non-standard modes of socio-cultural perception and the world views that each nurtures. Furthermore, Shevchenko develops and employs a range of textual markers to alert the audience when his verse should be read in these terms.

The chief consequences of Shevchenko's literary shamanism follow from the texts' capacity to restructure the "linguistic spaces" that constitute such cognitive constructs as self-understanding and (group) identity. To the extent that the shamanically informed poems do so, they effect rhetorically mediated shifts in their audiences into diversely beneficial perceptual states. Insofar as readers associate these shifts with the poet himself, a cult-like adulation of the authorial persona may ensue.

Table of Contents

Introduction 001

Shamanism in General 021

Literary Shamanism 051

Shevchenko as Shaman 072

The Poetry as Narrative Therapy 134

Some Case Studies 180

The Comparative Moment 204

Summary and Conclusions 236

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

> "[Shakespeare] was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were, or that they could become." —William Hazlitt

To the late twentieth-century reader "Shevchenko" appears more as an argument than as a literary figure or a corpus of texts. For more than a hundred years, the gamut of Shevchenko studies has run from the gathering of anecdotes and personal recollections to relatively sophisticated work based on insights provided by modern literary theory, cultural anthropology, and other contemporary cognitive sciences. Most of these perspectives, however, have bequeathed only monochromatic, highly polarized portraits of the artist. National bard, prophet, "revolutionary democrat," relentless crusader against serfdom — these and several other similarly reductive labels have been foisted on the writer, often with the intent of pressing his texts into the service of particular belief systems.[1] Much of what has at times passed for scholarship on closer examination resolves into a veritable battle for the custodianship of Ukraine's premier cultural icon, the manifest ideological prerogative which that icon has always carried, and especially the emergent Ukrainian consciousness of group-identity which it apparently animates. The battle itself has been well documented; the sources and mechanisms of Shevchenko's iconic privilege typically receive somewhat less scrutiny.

---

[1] In his introduction to George S. N. Luckyj (ed.) *Shevchenko and the Critics* (Toronto, 1980), Bohdan Rubchak summarizes the main lines of thinking about Shevchenko from the 1840s to modern times, focusing in particular on the "struggle" around the poet (the issue of *narodnist'*, the split into Soviet and émigré "camps," etc.). Similar if less extensive surveys may also be found in other sources, as for example Petro Odarčenko, "Ševčenko in Soviet Literary Criticism" in *Taras Ševčenko: 1814-1861 A Symposium*, Volodymyr Mijakovs'kyj and George Y. Shevelov, eds. (The Hague, 1962).

In its current state, *shevchenkoznavstvo* emerges as a reevaluation of several decades of static (and often mutually antagonistic) characterizations. It is no longer considered sound academic practice, for example, to call Shevchenko "the father of" anything, to advance him primarily or exclusively as, say, a Ukrainian Byron, or to position him as an apostle of any sectarian agenda. Preoccupation with details of biography, textology, and partisan politics has been giving way to analyses which allow not only multilateral perspectives on the poet, but also increasingly view their domain-subject as a set of *relations* among Shevchenko's many facets rather than as a collection of text *objects*.

The most significant of these more recent expositions has been George G. Grabowicz's mythopoetic approach, wherein Shevchenko's poetry is demonstrated to be built around an inherent code, one which permits it to be read not only in terms of local culture or Romantic convention, but also as an inquiry concerning general human values and preoccupations. This code is myth: "a multi-tracked narrative constituting a coherent and closed symbolic system."[2] Grabowicz's method involves characterizing the component elements of Shevchenko's model, identifying in the process such loci as the poet's implementation of mythic time, prelapsarian states, and millennial visions.[3] A picture emerges tying together the personal and collective spheres, national and individual traumas, and in so doing elucidates the mechanisms by which Shevchenko's cultural "product" is generated. The primary theoretical considerations throughout are those of reception and conceptualization, and lead to a radical rethinking of the poet's mindset and creative principles. A second (though not secondary) set of concerns focuses on clarifying the patterns of structural oppositions with which the poetry is so heavily suffused: the male and female worlds, structure and communitas, the worlds of serfdom and the Cossack state.

---

[2] George G. Grabowicz, *The Poet as Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Ševčenko* (Cambridge, MA 1982) p. 44, henceforth *PAM*. The choice of the term "myth" to discuss a key aspect of Shevchenko's work is at once accurate and ambiguous. Accurate because mythic perception in the poetry does exactly counterpoise itself to linear, evidence-based accounts of the world; ambiguous in that myth's chief connotations remain in the realm of the false, the unprovable, the fictitious—and therefore ultimately the irrelevant. Grabowicz takes considerable pains to distinguish these more general uses of the word from its technical, structural-anthropological sense (see in particular *PAM* pp. 44-45), but the inherent complexity of such a definition, especially taken together with the word's popular meaning, has resulted in no more that a slow acceptance of the nomenclature.

[3] Since its appearance fifteen years ago, Grabowicz's book has continuously defined the cutting edge of Shevchenko scholarship. Before it the overwhelming mass of Shevchenko work had been Soviet and restricted itself to the following typology:

1. Textology: descriptions and commentary
2. Minutiae of Shevchenko's biography
3. Epistolographic studies
4. Memoirs about Shevchenko
5. Poems (mostly "political") mined for their socio-political significance
6. Periodizations of Shevchenko's creative life
7. "Tie-ins": Shevchenko and Belinsky, Shevchenko and Atheism, Shevchenko and Armenian Literature, etc.

An enduring aspect of Shevchenko's literary persona which the Grabowicz monograph begins to address systematically is his powerful and prominent position as a cult figure. Traditional treatments of Shevchenko reinforcing the perennial portrayal of the poet as a supreme ethical, political, or spiritual standard have caused some problems, especially for those trying to advance an academic understanding of this central figure in Ukrainian literature. On one hand, personal apotheosis has brought about shifts away from perception of the writer as an empirical phenomenon. (Grabowicz, by contrast, applies structuralist

---

The prevailing perspectives involved examining and cataloging "themes," folkloric elements, political motifs, and literary influences and models. Grabowicz holds all these to be surface features, as opposed to the poetry's "deep structures" which he wishes to expose.

conceptual frameworks and methodology in seeking to delineate the complex relationships between the collective Ukrainian cultural-historical construct and its personally mediated expression in Shevchenko.) Insofar as indulgence in gratuitous mystification represents subordination of the rational process, it gives license to emotionalism, which in turn obscures the essential textual dynamics of Shevchenko's poetic art. On the other hand, none of the currently employed structuralist or post-structuralist exegetic technologies appears particularly able to account for Shevchenko's relentless and longstanding function of cultural avatar.[4]

Ironically, at the same time as Shevchenko's Ukrainian-language poetry is being read from various cutting-edge theoretical perspectives, the point of departure for these more recent readings remains, in almost every case, precisely a declaration of conscious distancing from any "cult" of Shevchenko. Even as early as the 1870s, no lesser authorities than P. Kulish and M. Drahomanov had independently identified and denounced such a cult, already well-developed just a few years after the poet's death.[5] But this merely adds to the evidence of its tenacity: present-day writers still feel compelled to begin their own expositions by lamenting or at least alluding negatively to the simplistic, obsessive adulation of Shevchenko that continues to constitute the larger part of both popular and academic Shevchenko-awareness. The abiding import of the populist, nativist, and identity-(in)forming receptions of the poetry stands in suspiciously stark opposition to the equally steadfast and emphatic claims about the same phenomenon's low priority and general inconsequentiality. Every commentary which pointedly deplores the cultic aspects of Shevchenko, labelling them immature, barren, and undesirable, in that very act affirms their significance. Questions engaging this self-contradictory state of affairs continue to await formulation.

---

[4] At the end of his book Grabowicz acknowledges the detrimental aspect of the myth's popularity, noting for example that it has not had a positive effect on Ukraine's socio-political heritage. "Even more questionable, indeed potentially fatal, was the legacy of the mythical thinking that Ševčenko inculcated upon the psyche of succeeding generations of his countrymen. For in direct proportion to the apotheosis of communitas and the negation of structure came hypertrophy of the emotional and a blockage of the rational faculties." (*PAM* p. 162)

---

[5] In the early 1870s Kulish wrote a three-volume study entitled *Istoriia vossoedineniia Rusi* (St Petersburg, 1874) which among other things affirmed the legitimacy of the Imperial status quo. In it he launches an attack on Shevchenko as a historiographic authority, partly through impugning the poetry (in particular *Hajdamaky*) on factological grounds and partly by castigating the writer for his "irresponsibility" in encouraging cults of chaos, blood-lust, and programmatic political disobedience. Drahomanov too was concerned that Shevchenko's poetical texts were being appropriated and distorted for political ends (see "Shevchenko, ukrainofily i sotsiializm," *Hromada* IV (Geneva, 1879)). The better to contain the harm he saw as deriving from unrestrained cultification of the poet and politicization of the poetry, Drahomanov sought to devalorize the former by belittling the latter. A description of these positions and the attendant historical details can be found in Jurij Lawrynenko, "Ševčenko and His *Kobzar* in the Intellectual and Political History of a Century" in *Taras Ševčenko: 1814-1861 A Symposium*, especially pp. 184-205. It is important to note that beyond describing and deploring, neither thinker was able to *explain* the phenomenon with which he was faced.

At an even more basic level, it remains customary to speak of (or dismiss) the "cult of Shevchenko" as something well documented and widely understood. In fact this is only true in some respects. A surface, quantificatory view does exist: the ubiquity of monuments and icons, the mass of eponymous institutions and organizations, the seemingly endless rituals of celebration and commemoration. But what has not yet been adequately evidenced is the scale and scope of the phenomenon, nor has any unified theoretical treatment emerged from a sociological, psychological, or even historical point of view. While a chronicle (and *a fortiori* an analysis) of the Shevchenko-myth is neither possible nor appropriate here, it should be noted that the field is still waiting for a comprehensive, scholarly account of Shevchenko as a cultic construct or cultural complex separate from his artistic persona. Fierce devotionalism may not appear to be a seemly or significant topic for scientific inquiry, straddling as it does the intersection of the anecdotal, the behaviorally pathological, and the mob-mediated apotheosis of an artist's creative existence.[6] Perhaps this is why habitually the cult of Shevchenko is either embraced or disclaimed, and thus removed from serious scrutiny in both cases: by reason of descent into extreme subjectivity in the first instance, and aspiration to maximum objectivity in the second. Either way, the cult phenomenon is constantly referenced without being systematically investigated.

This common inability to pass from subjective impressions of the multilevelled artistic force of the poetry to a reasoned, comprehensive reception of the poet — without in the process becoming mired in sentimental veneration — may stem in part from a lack of elucidation of the relationship between the personal and the collective in Shevchenko. Not yet completely clear are the processes by which he links or moves between these two domains. Indeed, if Shevchenko's Ukrainian poetry evokes audience responses that are not easily accounted for by existing theoretical frameworks, it may be taken as evidence that the writings' "spiritual" function will not yield to intellectual analysis, remaining forever beyond the power of rationality to probe. More generally, we encounter an almost total theoretical vacuum in trying to investigate the processes that inform the nexus between the collective and the individual. Questions concerning the limen between subjectivity and symbolic order, instrumentality and social control, experience and representation remain interstitial for the moment.

---

[6] Serious researchers have been known to avoid the investigation of certain topics for the very reason that their subject matter was defined by its anti-rational content. This is why there exists relatively little scientific treatment of medieval European alchemy or first-millennium Chinese immortality cults, for example. Apparently the very fact of evincing an interest in alien cognitive systems may call into question the researcher's commitment to the primacy of the rational position.

Part of the problem is that some scholars see only or mainly Shevchenko's collective-oriented expression. This is the source of "nationalist" and other agenda-bound, Ukrainian identity-generating positions on the poet. Others primarily see his texts as personal. In fact, the task here is to demonstrate that the complex and subtle quantity known as "Shevchenko" arises out of an *interaction* between the two. Just as the academic field may be seen as polarized between the ideological and the structuralist/ mythical approaches (until very recently this corresponded to a Soviet-émigré division), so there exists a tension between denial of a cult and the perpetuation of that cult through using it as a baseline orientation. As well, we have a tension (perhaps not so much tension as confusion and lack of clarity) between Shevchenko-as-text-object and Shevchenko's words as the spiritual grounding of Ukrainian identity and consciousness. It is not sufficient, in this last regard, simply to note that the poet used folk motifs, made (perceived) socio-political exhortations, or invoked the national past. Most of the 19th century Ukrainian corpus did this, from Levko Borovykovs'kyj to Ivan Franko and literati like Lesia Ukrainka who tried consciously to distance herself and Ukrainian literature in general from orientation on such limited factors. Similarly, while it is true that Shevchenko should be seen as a mythopoeic poet who offers a world made up of archetypes, it remains necessary to ask what is the *source* of this activity and through what mechanisms does it affect its audience in the way that it does. (It is not, for example, a mere matter of the skillfully crafted re-telling of historical or oral material, or recurrent invocation of cultural symbols. This is exactly what Shevchenko's epigones in the second half of the 19th century did, but none of them is remembered today. Chapter seven provides case examples detailing how this might be explained.) In other words, the poet stands at once maximally revered and only nominally apprehended. Shevchenko is unquestionably different, powerful — but no one seems to have fully fathomed why.

As a next-step aid in perhaps eventually resolving some of these issues, the present thesis proposes a method of examining the Shevchenko poetic corpus in terms of a hitherto undescribed but textually intrinsic discursive order, henceforth to be referred to as the *shamanic mode*. The word choice is intended to reflect an overlapping functionality described both by cultural (especially medical) anthropology and certain types of approaches to therapeutic counselling. Exact details will emerge as the model is developed, but in brief summary the "shaman function" subsumes such cognitive interventions as reconfigure, replace, or reinterpret the ambient symbolic order in terms of which people (or trans-individual entities such as nations or organizations) understand themselves. Especially this pertains to evaluations of merit or appropriateness of hierarchical positions. Thus "shamanizing" in this sense may be thought of as a class of benign intercessions into self-perception. Its purpose is to strengthen the symbolic cohesions of the group and in so doing to enhance overall quality of life—for entire civilizations as much as for their individual members. The central contention of this thesis is that a clearly demarcated subset of Shevchenko's poetry performs in precisely such a shamanic capacity for its readers.

Although a detailed exposition of the term "shaman" occupies most of chapter two, it may be useful at this time to clarify the fundamental terminology, in at least a cursory way, as it will be applied in the immediate instance. As used in this dissertation, the word "shamanism" refers neither to a subject of research in cultural anthropology, nor to a New Age metaphor for spiritual leadership—although, as will be seen, it acknowledges a debt to these. Instead, shamanism as a concept describing a literary mode needs to be constructed before being implemented, and for this purpose it abstracts (and to a lesser degree generalizes) some aspects of how the word may be understood in more popular usage.

A usefully reductive, unencumbered formulation might look like this: "A shaman is one who helps people in their dealings with other worlds."[7] Interpreted widely, "other worlds" may mean psychological as well as more concrete dislocations of equilibrium in human affairs. The shaman's aid in managing such issues flows from his skill at performing "journeys" into these other realms in order to map, describe and explain the perceived chaos residing there, and hence to assist people in adapting to (or at the very least accepting) change through restoration of balance of the required kind: social, emotional, physiological — or linguistic. Specific examples of counterparts to each such "shamanic" mechanism in Shevchenko's poetry are examined at length in the following pages; that the overall progression of such mechanisms in the corpus also resembles a shaman's world view naturally suggests the phrase "shamanic mode" to describe the textual structures which serve as its vehicle.

It has already been noted that the study of Shevchenko's poetic oeuvre is not well served by univariate critical treatments; rather it is more fruitfully investigated as constituted, at least semiotically, by interactions between easily identified dipoles: personal and collective, Russian and Ukrainian, archetypal and literal, to name just a few. These interactions accord with a *shamanic* authorial model and express themselves through identifiable textual reflexes.[8] A description of the shamanic mode in Shevchenko's Ukrainian-language poetry together with a prototypical implementation of its reading function will make up the substance of this essay. Specific attention will be given to the reception of that poetry, observing in particular how the texts position their author as a meta-literary figure.

---

[7] Amber Wolfe, *The Truth About Shamanism* 2nd ed. (St. Paul MN, 1994), p. 1.

Of course, no attempt will be made to argue that Shevchenko's shamanism was avocational, voluntary, or beholden to any formal standards. Certainly it was not avowedly religious in the manner that self-identified shamanic disciplines reveal themselves to scientists engaged in field research, nor was it informed by any expressedly mediumistic tradition. Neither is it contended that Shevchenko was gathering images or other elements previously identified as shamanic and positioning them within his verse.[9] Instead, Shevchenko's shamanism will be delineated as being *functional* in nature and *literary* with respect to expression. The poet actually accesses a non-standard cognitive state and uses this state to generate his texts; when consumed by a certain audience, the texts set in motion a "rhetoric of healing" similar to that documented in the literature of medical anthropology.

---

[8] As will be seen throughout the following discussion, this essentially defines what shamanism in general means: successful negotiations of, including transitions between, opposed or conflicting states of existence.

The word "reflex" as employed here derives from a coinage by Stephen O. Glosecki, *Shamanism and Old English Poetry* (New York, 1989). On page 1 the author explains:

> Some knowledge of shamanism can enhance our understanding of the early poetry as an art form rooted in a tribal tradition.... Before the Migrations, Germanic artists had a shamanic world view; after the Migrations, traces of the old symbols survived the shift from prehistory to history to appear as intermittent motifs in the later literature. These intermittent motifs are what I call "reflexes" of shamanism.

Despite the relatively specialized emphases used to delimit the denotative scope of "Shevchenko's literary shamanism" in this way, the approach adopted here grounds itself in a sufficiently broad theoretical base. Even when restricted to scholarly discussion, the notion of "shamanism" can cause some difficulty, not primarily due to the complexity of the concept, but because of its overly broad usage. Chapter two sets forth the applicable anthropological background in terms of which literary shamanism will be positioned, and attempts to abstract the most relevant features for literary study and for Shevchenko's case in particular. Chapter three goes on to trace the relationships between literature and shamanic practice, focusing especially on how the artistic enterprise has been conceptualized by writers and critics in terms directly supporting shamanic readings of literary texts. With the fourth chapter, Shevchenko's verse becomes the target of the theory thus far developed. In particular, the poetry is shown to contain specific markers — recurring topoi, fixed images, distinctive collocations — which indicate a transition to a shamanic modality. Especially interesting are the poems in which such indicators point to descriptions of overtly shamanic activities such as trance journeys or invocations of spirit-familiars.

---

[9] This was exactly what *was* being done by many Ukrainian poets throughout most of the 19th century, though not of course with shamanic items. The pre-Romantics of the Kharkiv School, for example, depended heavily on an "imagic lexicon"—a programmatic phraseological aggregate consisting of Cossacks on horses, banduras, sabres, the steppe, etc. — assembled seemingly mechanically into rhymes. Since Shevchenko does employ much of the same lexical repertoire, it is instructive to see why the poetry of, say, Metlyns'kyj, does *not* exhibit shamanic properties. Chapter seven addresses this issue specifically.

A somewhat more sophisticated argument makes up the next chapter. Beyond documenting the comparatively static features of Shevchenko's shamanic mode, chapter five attests to a therapeutic dynamic: not only the author can undertake revitalizing shifts into non-standard perceptional states — appropriately constructed texts can effect a salutary cognitive relocation of the audience as well. Chapter six takes the methodology derived in the preceding two and amplifies it through application to some of Shevchenko's most manifestly shamanic works: "Perebendia," "Son (Komedia)," and "Iak umru to pokhovajte..." among others. Comparison of a shamanic reading of Shevchenko to standard exegesis in terms of Romanticism begins chapter seven. Attention is given to other Ukrainian-language poetry of Shevchenko's time, and especially to that of his imitators.

Scholarly precedents for a shamanic reception of Shevchenko are not numerous. To be sure, a wealth of ascriptions of "altered states of consciousness" to the poet's creative processes does exist. A typical example, taken from an early attempt to explain the affective force of Shevchenko's poetry, runs as follows:

> The true creative process always is connected with emotional tension, with an accelerated blood pulse. This was a fact well know to artists even in ancient times. The ancient prophets, priests, and priestesses have known, as do the shamans in primitive nations of our time, how to induce in themselves this state of elation with the help of narcotics.[10]

The article tries to explicate the poetry as a product of "perceptual-aesthetic emotions," and comes fairly close to positing a trance state as their source. Zajcev also observes that this was related to Shevchenko's awareness of a specific avocation in connection with his poetic writings and that he (Shevchenko) describes it in prose. That it is also described in a number of the poems apparently somehow eluded Zajcev's notice.

---

[10] Pavlo Zajcev, "Ševčenko's Creative Process" in *Taras Ševčenko: 1814-1861 A Symposium*, page 107. The quote addresses "creative frenzy." Later in the piece Zajcev speaks at length about "aesthetic arousal" and "poetic transport," but cannot bring himself to take the next step and place Shevchenko alongside the "primitive" shamans who serve as the point of departure for his article.

> In his diary Ševčenko mentions some irresistible force (he calls it a vocation) stimulated his imagination, forced him to "ponder" or "forget what he was thinking," and induced in him the process of composing poems. This happened when he saw the paintings of Karl Brjullov: "Before his bewitching canvas (*sic*) I fell into reveries and evoked in my heart my blind *kobzar* and the bloodthirsty *hajdamaky*."[11]

Grabowicz also refers to this passage, citing it as his first piece of evidence for the poet's "non-adjusted" self:

> Though Ševčenko himself never attempted to provide a dispassionate analysis, he felt full well the power of this side of his ego, which in his *Diary* he portrayed as driven by a "strange and restless calling."[12]

Like Zajcev, he misses the point that Shevchenko *was* very like an actual shaman in certain key ways (to be fair, Grabowicz adduces all the right evidence and arguments, but then fails to put them together into a unified model; occasional examples are given throughout this dissertation). He even compares Shevchenko to a shaman, singling out precisely the essential feature that makes the parallel profoundly valid, but for some reason neglects to generalize the metaphor.

---

[11] Page 113. The reference is to the entry in the *Diary* for July 1st, 1857.

[12] *PAM* p. 9. The salient passage reads: "Право, странное это неугомонное призвание."

> In his mature poetry...Ševčenko consistently assumes the role of a prophet who consciously articulates the myth to his people and both consciously and unconsciously, like a shaman, serves them as mediator between past and present, present and future, man and God...[13]

Essential though the mythopoetic reading is to a thorough understanding of Shevchenko's cultural impact, for all of its apposite insights into this very idea, it has not yet synthesized the notion of the artist as a transformer of linguistic space.

Perhaps the most interesting attempt to employ a shamanic model in *shevchenkoznavstvo* to date comes from Leonid Pliushch.[14] This two-part article, based on a paper presented to the Shevchenko Scientific Society in New York in 1986, makes use of a fairly traditional and therefore somewhat limited technique. Pliushch's method fundamentally comes down to drawing parallels between narrative elements loosely associated with what he calls "shamanic beliefs" (as will be seen in the next chapter, there is no such thing in a strict sense—he actually has in mind the mythic world view) and select passages from Shevchenko's poems. Often he is quite right: the idea of a centrally situated tree, for example, might be cognate with the Tree of Knowledge found in so many mythological accounts (though whether or how this tree would be uniquely shamanic is not established). And just possibly some tree in a poem by Shevchenko can be related to the one in the Garden of Eden or the Tree of Life in Norse mythology. However, for Pliushch *any* tree seems eligible for interpretation along such lines. Nor is there any visible attempt to distinguish mere folk beliefs and superstitions from genuinely and singularly shamanic customs. For the most part, the essay amasses references in the poetry to supernatural events and folkloric themes and proceeds to pronounce that they contribute to a "shamanic poetics." Among the more blatant omissions of process is the fact that if shamanism constitutes a discrete entity, it should display some systematic features rather than present as a mere bricolage of strange items and performances. Working from such disjoint ingredients, as an example, Pliushch concludes on their basis that the topic of shamanic initiation receives a "complete" treatment in only one poem in the *Kobzar*, "Vid'ma,"[15] amazingly missing the clearest

---

[13] *PAM*, p. 148. Part of the problem might be that Grabowicz does not rigorously distinguish a prophet from a mediator. Though overlapping in their external manifestations, the two functions spring from entirely different cognitive schemas and operate in separate symbolic systems.

[14] L. I. Pliushch, "Shamanna poetyka T. H. Shevchenka" *Filosofs'ka i sotsiolohichna dumka*, No. 6 p. 130, and No. 7 p. 27, 1992.

---

[15] Page 144 of the first article. The case for a shamanic initiation being described in "Vid'ma" is not especially convincing.

(but not sole) enunciation of this watershed event in Shevchenko's life as described in "Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo..."

For all its shortcomings, Pliushch's work does make some important contributions, and these will be brought into evidence here as the exposition proceeds. His efforts, after all, are directed along lines which have but barely begun to be explored. To better ground, understand, and reinterpret (as well as at times reign in) findings like his requires positing a fairly meticulous framework from which to investigate the newly-proposed tools as well as the territory they are expected to uncover. Therefore, before moving forward to substantiate the claim that Shevchenko indeed operated creatively at least some of the time from within a shamanic sensibility, it will be helpful to show what shamanism looks like as a generalized cognitive mode, and especially to offer a sketch of the (as-yet embryonic) shamanology of the literary creative process.

Chapter Two

SHAMANISM IN GENERAL

> "Shaping one's story is both a spiritual as well as an aesthetic practice." —*Brochure on women's writing, University of Alberta*

Shaman (-ism, -ic, etc.) as a terminological resource has never been fully inducted into literary critical usage.[1] Presently it takes its denotation from two streams: the academic fields of anthropology and religious studies, and a more popularized but much less precise "New Age" labelling wherein almost any non-standard activity or experience may become the recipient of the "shaman" tag. Both streams indicate that things shamanic (or more exactly the idea of such things) command a considerable interest among professionals and laity alike. A search of the literature, for example, reveals that in most holdings the number of items under this rubric easily surpasses that devoted to major world religions.[2] Moreover, the overwhelming majority of these works represents only the past three decades or so; the rate at which new titles are appearing is increasing also.

---

[1] Occasional works on literary shamanism have appeared, but the approach does not yet have a theoretical presence. Studies of individual poets aside (and these have been only a few in number), books attempting to establish the links between artistic endeavor and shamanism have been less than rigorous in their treatment of the subject. However, they do contribute positively to the formulation of the key questions and identify, even if only by omission, the many conceptual and methodological weaknesses of non-anthropological shamanology. Two typical examples are Robert Burdette Sweet, *Writing Towards Wisdom: The Writer as Shaman* (Carmichael, CA 1990) and Mark Levy, *Technicians of Ecstasy: Shamanism and the Modern Artist* (Norfolk, CT 1993). The discussion of literary shamanism proper occurs in chapter three of this thesis.

It is no accident that the very notion of shamanism, however inexact, should enjoy the broad appeal that it does today. The need for a multi-function mental buffer against vicissitudes not covered by measures of physical security has been endemic to all peoples, and rises sharply in times of threatened or reduced social cohesiveness. A culture which loses certain parts of its identity stabilization system through compromise of its self-integration mechanisms turns to such technologies and strategies (including textual ones—enacting ad hoc legislation in response to an unanticipated crisis is one obvious example[3]) as promise to reestablish a sense of control or at least stability. In such situations shamans or their more secular functional equivalents, such as psychiatrists, have always been called upon to renegotiate mental health, communal well-being, and its various attendant continuities (as for example of institutions or identity).

---

[2] A comprehensive published bibliography of shamanistic studies does not appear to exist. Perhaps the most useful source at present is the list posted occasionally by Dean Edwards to the Internet newsgroup soc.religion.shamanism.

[3] The announcement at the end of February 1997 of successful mammalian cloning resulted in an immediate American presidential ban on all federal funding for human cloning research—even though no such research was being funded (Leon R. Kass, "The Wisdom of Repugnance" *The New Republic* June 2, 1997 p. 17). Though largely irrational, such essentially textual reactions to disturbing developments in the physical world are not the exception.

The prevalent spiritual and material conditions in the Western world may serve as an example. No one can doubt that the contemporary symbolic order is characterized if not actually constituted by precisely such factors: a fading of deterministic world views, the abrogation of traditional gender roles, the negation of absolutist ethics, and a general collapse of unitary belief systems. An appeal to shamanic process would fit the demand for cultural homeostasis remarkably well under these particular circumstances, and this is exactly what we are witnessing taking place.[4] Shevchenko's time was no less informed by similar and possibly more incisive mutability; his response, though literary, will be shown to fit the shamanic pattern remarkably closely.

Before using the conceptual array subtended by the word *shaman* for literary analysis, it is necessary to review both its scholarly and popular usages. This is not an especially straightforward task. As a profession or even an ad hoc set of empirical methods, shamanism has always been totally atomistic and unregulated. It rests on no seminal texts, cultivates no institutional aspect, recognizes no external authority with respect to any of its procedures or its definition of itself—nor does it seek to acquire any of these. No linear tradition is deferred to, no ranking system is observed, no histories are kept[5]. Moreover, these absences likely proceed from inalienable properties of shamanic practice itself; as such they almost certainly point to some key aspect of shamanism's essential self-definition.

---

[4] Instances of corporations willing to underwrite, say, fire-walking seminars to boost employee productivity are exceedingly common (see, for example, *San Jose Mercury News*, August 5, 1996 page F1 for a report on corporate meditation programs). The February 24, 1997 issue of *Time* reports that President Clinton has hired a *feng sui* expert — a species of geomantic shaman — to influence the "vital energies" of the Oval Office (p. 12).

One consequence of this unconstrained state of affairs is that in cases of dispute, statements made about shamanism cannot be easily referred to an independent authority for a definitive ruling; a second result is that whatever authoritative sources are in the process of becoming established, they continue to pit scientific inquiry against self-styled "initiates." And given that the currently fashionable New Age-stylized promotion of shamanism (at least as a popular buzzword) gives the whole concept far more visibility than does formal research, a back-propagation of vulgarized "knowledge" has increasingly found its way into serious scholarship.[6]

---

[5] Shevchenko would likely have been completely at home with such an arrangement. His own literary output (at least the verse) was remarkably unencumbered by exterior regulations: there are no recognizable standard forms (e.g., sonnets, odes) in the poetry, no authorially declared order to the works, the language itself is in a sense largely "made up" for the occasion. He did not especially distinguish between a "variant" of a poem and anything like a "final" version, even going so far as to be unclear about whether a given poem "existed" or not. (See George G. Grabowicz, "Self-Definition and Decentering: Ševčenko's "Xiba samomu napysat'" and the Question of Writing," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. XIV No. 3-4. Dec. 1990 p. 313 for a discussion of some extreme examples of Shevchenko's "writing under erasure," especially page 317 and note 11.) In concert with such an unstructured attitude, to this day there exists no standard (or even complete) edition of Shevchenko's poetry, no authoritative commentary, or any custodial "estate" governing his legacy.

Thus it is possible that definition in the sense of strict language-bound circumscription violates some essential aspect of genuine shamanic practice, so that in effect any crisp formulation of the concept nullifies itself in the very act of being constructed. Beyond that, definition per se may ultimately prove not only antithetical to shamanism, but perhaps the least significant factor in seeking to access and understand it. Past attempts to pin down this set of practices to a stable and consistent formula have repeatedly proved either insufficiently comprehensive or too broad — which might be interpreted as additional evidence that the subject-domain may contain some crucial features rendering it immune to verbal binding.

---

[6] An excellent example of such inexactitude is the question of the origin of the word itself. Almost invariably, accounts of shamanism begin by informing the reader that "shaman" derives from the Tungus (Siberian) *šaman*, in turn related to such "know" words as the French *savoir* or Spanish *saber* via the Indo-European verb root *ša-* — possibly cognate with the Sanskrit *šramana*, "an ascetic." Or it may mean "making heat." The problem with all this is that virtually no sources acknowledge that these conjectures have been decisively discredited by linguistic scholarship starting with M. Eliade's own seminal work, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (see below), where the question is addressed beginning on page 495.

Typically and woefully inadequately, a shaman is identified as a tribal doctor,[7] which phrase subsumes duties elsewhere classified as sorcerer, oracle, prognosticator, artist, performer etc. Unfortunately, most of these items in their turn carry no more precise meaning than the terms which they have been called upon to clarify. A great deal of intellectual energy has gone into discussing what distinguishes a "medicine man" from a "witch doctor" from a shaman (from a priest, magician, etc.) without noticeably contributing to the exactitude of any of these words. This terminological vagueness follows from the fact that the intense anthropological scrutiny given to shamanism in recent years has focused almost exclusively on pre-urban or proto-historical societies. The notion that shamanism might find expression in much less "primitive" settings has found only very occasional mention.[6] But in fact the phenomenon of shamanism manages to persist today both openly and in various altered forms not always easily accessible to the average person. The shamanic process manifests itself more less continuously, in settings considerably more immediate than the remotely tribal, and underlies several aspects of quotidian life not normally dismissed as illusory (see, e.g., note 4 in this chapter).

---

[7] "Tribal" eludes satisfactory definition to the same degree and for much the same reasons as does "shaman." Here "tribe" will denote a unit of non-urban societal organization where family equals polity, and "family" means extended family in its most expansive sense (as in the Latin word *gens*) so that not all members of the tribe need be consanguineous. Beyond that, tribe connotes a sacral head kinsman, totemic rules and rituals, and a pre-industrial technology.

A further difficulty with defining shamanism flows from its sheer ubiquity. Shamanic activity (that is, the modern construct so called) has been attested in every place on earth and in all historical periods, as well as in pre-history at least back to Paleolithic times. The evidence takes a great variety of forms, being both constrained by cultural and linguistic barriers and simultaneously transcending them. Much of this substantiation is not material or fails to meet the scientific criteria for "evidence." Still other artifacts of shamanism remain entirely dependent on technologies and systems of thought as opaque to objectivist investigation as the very shamanic practices they support.

---

[6] As has been already noted, scientific inquiry into shamanism and matters related has always contained the unstated prejudice that the topic at hand proceeds and is inseparable from conditions informed by superstition, illiteracy, non-scientific world views, and a generally backward intellectual state. Shamanism is seen as a relic of unenlightened times and places, something that would not and does not survive sophisticated scrutiny if examined on its own terms in the light of modern scientific knowledge. In other words, shamanism may be studied as a quaint and even important artifact of early human evolution, but it is not accorded full existential status: none of its component elements is regarded as actually being real.

Despite these problems, it remains clear that the word "shamanism" does denote a set of universal practices, and that at least some invariant features may be identified in these practices which would serve to isolate shamanism's definitive traits. It is not merely a tag, part of an attempt by anthropologists to superimpose a classificatory grid on the tribal societies they select for study. Neither is it just a general pointer to "ecstatic" conditions for the convenience of contemporary consumers of spiritual paths. The fact is that shamanism as an observable set of activities and concomitant results turns out to rest on an internal and integral cognitive core which is independent of its performative or taxonomic details. So without necessarily acceding to a rigid Aristotelian *definition* of shamanism (i.e., assigning something to a class and then differentiating it from the other members of that class), it is nevertheless possible to *characterize it as a system* and from this to extract its essence.[9]

---

[9] Steven O. Glosecki, in the notes to his *Shamanism and Old English Poetry* (N.Y., 1989) gives about a dozen "definitions" of shamanism culled from the academic experts (pp. 212-414), but in fact these are only descriptions of shamanic techniques or of the shaman's position in the social hierarchy. They neither classify nor attempt to isolate essential characteristics.

Once this is done, it will become evident that the irreducible principle of shamanism is *experiential*.

The widely quoted description of shamanism as a "technique of ecstasy" comes from a similarly titled book by Mircea Eliade (Willard R. Trask, transl.), *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton University Press, 1964).[10] Beyond being the source of this accurate if somewhat abstract phrase, Eliade's book provides the description of generalized shamanism which continues to shape our understanding of it today. Most contemporary popularizations of shamanism, for example, while perhaps reporting specific additional instances of shamanic practice do not go beyond Eliade in their interpretations or theoretical accounting.

From its very beginning, *Shamanism* declares itself to be the work of a religious historian and therefore subject to the limitations attendant upon this bias. The bulk of the book consists of analyses of prior field reports by researchers, folklorists, missionaries, and the like (S. M. Shirokogoroff, W. Sieroszewski, Wilhelm Schmidt, A. Métraux, V. M. Mikhailowski, and a host of others). At first the expositional organization is vocational: separate chapters deal with the shaman's recruitment, training, initiation, and tools of the trade. From there the presentation becomes functional and geographic: we learn what it is that shamans do and how they do it on different continents. Parallel themes and motifs are traced with a comparativist's exhaustive attention to detail, and continuity with religious ritual and tribal m[illegible] is found in abundance. Eliade's conclusions, not surp[illegible]ly, partake of the historical and ethnographic perspecti[illegible] th [illegible]le attention paid to "influences." We must remem[illegible]e book was written in the 1940s and collates field work done decades earlier, well before the social sciences came into their own as scientific disciplines[11].

---

[10] First published as *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase* (Paris, 1951), this intensely academic tome has become the de facto authoritative study of the magico-religious complex being considered here. Subsequent references to "Eliade" are to the 1964 translation of this work unless otherwise noted.

---

[11] These qualifications with respect to the significance of Eliade's treatise are factored in only seldom, with even trained scientists accepting its formulations uncritically for the most part. Occasional instances of much-needed revisionism do appear:

> A compelling ideal type of Siberian shamanism, defined by the idea of ecstatic ascent to a celestial supreme being, was proposed by Eliade ([1951] 1964) and has been used by countless other authors as a point of comparison for their own regions. In constructing his idea of "shamanism in the strict and proper sense," Eliade turned the inspirational religious practices of north Asia into a timeless mystery. Peoples, of whom no description whatsoever is given, and at no particular date, are cited as providing examples of this or that aspect of shamanism, as though shamanism were some metaphysical entity making its presence felt despite

Alongside Eliade, the other major explorer in the newly-recognized anthropological domain was Claude Lévi-Strauss. Where the earlier researcher presented shamanism as an archaic religious ecstatic technique, Lévi-Strauss saw shamans as the spiritual ancestors of modern psychotherapists,[12] stressing their healing function over all else.

> The modern version of shamanistic technique called psychotherapy thus derives its specific characteristics from the fact that in industrial civilizations there is no longer any room for mythic time, except within man himself. From this observation, psychoanalysis can draw confirmation of its validity, as well as hope of strengthening its theoretical foundations and understanding better the reasons for its effectiveness, by comparing its methods and goals with those of its precursors, the shamans.[13]

> history and societies; it was assumed that only a prototypical form of shamanism located in remote prehistorical antiquity was genuine.

(Caroline Humphrey, "Shamanic Practices and the State in Northern Asia: Views from the Center and Periphery" in Nicholas Thomas and Caroline Humphrey, eds. *Shamanism, History, and the State* (Ann Arbor, 1994) p. 191.)

[12] The broader phenomenon of the therapeutic manipulation of world view in "primitive" as compared with contemporary cultures is treated in E. Fuller Torrey, *Witchdoctors and Psychiatrists: The Common Roots of Psychotherapy and Its Future* Northvale, N.J., 1986). Unlike most accounts of transcultural psychiatry, which concern themselves with relationships between disease complexes and acculturation patterns, Torrey's book examines the actual treatment methods and the therapists themselves.

[13] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, transl., (New York 1963), Vol I p. 204.

In likening the role of the shaman to that of his present-day counterpart, Lévi-Strauss points out that both have the intent of bringing to conscious levels the conflicts and interior obstacles whose inaccessibility gives rise to the patient's symptoms. Specifically, the technique employs words as symbols for the offending condition. It is effective not because of the knowledge as such that the words convey, "but because this knowledge makes possible a specific experience, in the course of which conflicts materialize in an order and on a level permitting their free development and leading to their resolution." (p. 193) The therapist correctly names what is wrong, whereupon the client comes into possession of a stable target for his efforts at resolution, as well as possibly of an arsenal of techniques by means of which to implement those efforts. In discussing the case of an Indian woman cured by a shaman, Lévi-Strauss observes:

> The shaman provides the sick woman with a *language* by means of which unexpressed, and otherwise inexpressible, psychic states can be immediately expressed. And it is the transition to this verbal expression...which induces the release of the psychological process, that is, the reorganization in a favorable direction of the process to which the sick woman is subjected. (p. 193, emphasis in original)

Lévi-Strauss's approach is also of interest because its inherent structuralist orientation supports the comparative method. If universal structures underlie discrete events, then similar patterns observed in dissimilar cultures may be profitably investigated by gradually unearthing the relevant invariances: coinciding environmental influences, common brain structure, and a shared general semantic design. In Shevchenko's case this is particularly interesting, since the relative intercultural structural identities extend to linguistic processes and cognitive spaces which exhibit striking parallels between expressedly shamanic literary works from ancient China and the *Kobzar*. Moreover, both sets of verbal patterns appear to address the needs of a recently-fragmented social hierarchy and the resulting widespread decomposition of personal identity — an explicit if less well known function entrusted to the shaman in general.

Thus a working template of "the shaman in general" can be educed from the work of these two great anthropologists. Drawing on both the descriptive/historical and the structuralist approaches we can map the essential features of shamanic principles and their implementation, regardless of whether they present themselves in ritual, political, medical or whatever other terms at the level of outward manifestation. More current studies have expanded on these foundations to derive a partial consensus as to the determinative (if still somewhat abstract) criteria to be used in shamanism's definition.

Considerably superior to the list supplied by Glosecki (see note 9 in the present chapter), for example, are some suggestions quoted by Geoffrey Samuel in 1990:

> (1) shamans have access to alternate states of consciousness and can produce these states at will, (2) they fulfill needs of their community which otherwise are not met, and (3) they are mediators between the sacred and the profane, they are interpreters and image-makers.[14]

> [shamanism] is a cult whose central idea is the belief in the ability of some individuals chosen by some spirits to communicate with them while in a state of ecstasy and perform the functions of an intermediary between the world of spirits and the given human collective (collectivity).[15]

Samuel devotes the ninth chapter of this book to "Shamanic Mechanisms" and also describes the transformative processes underlying "shamanic societies" on pp. 144-147. In a later work he examines a specific instance of shamanism as a distinct societal force, and arrives at a more rigorous characterization.

> I use the term "shamanic" as a general term for a category of practices found in differing degrees in almost all human societies. This category of practices

---

[14] Geoffrey Samuel, *Mind, Body and Culture: Anthropology and the Biological Interface* (Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 107, citing Ruth-Inge Heinze (ed.), *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Study of Shamanism* (Berkeley CA, 1985) page iii.

[15] Geoffrey Samuel, *Mind, Body and Culture* p. 107, citing V. N. Basilov, "Some Results of the Study of the Vestiges of Shamanism in Central Asia." Paper presented at the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Intercongress, Holland, 1981.

> may be briefly described as *the regulation and transformation of human life and human society through the use (or purported use) of altered states of consciousness by means of which specialist practitioners are held to communicate with a mode of reality alternative to, and more fundamental than, the world of everyday experience.*[16]

An even more recent study, also scrutinizing Asian religions, provides a similarly precise delineation, here in the course of distinguishing shamanism from mediumship and spirit possession.

> Adapting Hultkrantz's definition of a shaman, we may define a medium as *a social functionary whose body only, the person's awareness suppressed while in an ecstatic state, serves as a means for spirits to assist and/or communicate with members of the medium's group in a positive manner*. Hence, possession by malevolent spirits or malevolent possession is excluded from this definition.[17]

(Note how the common threads in the above outlines are also bound together by the shared portrayal of the shaman as a socially engaged operative.)

On an external level, then, shamanism may be summarily apprehended as being constituted from, and informed by, the following three dominant invariances:

---

[16] Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington, 1993) page 8. Emphasis in original.

[17] Jordan Paper, *The Spirits are Drunk: Comparative Approaches to Chinese Religion* (SUNY, 1995) p. 87, emphasis in original. The reference is to Ake Hultkrantz, "A Definition of Shamanism" *Temenos* No. 9 (1973) p. 25. Although Paper positions her definition in terms of mediums, the context of the given excerpt and indeed of the chapter from which it is taken clearly states that this is specifically her understanding of shamanism per se.

1. **Ecstatic state.**[18] Also known as trance journey, dream travel, metempsychotic flight, and by other names which are not exactly equivalent to one another nor freely interchangeable. The ability to enter a highly specific condition of consciousness sets shamans apart from other ecstatics, healers, mystics, or seers. Other kinds of practitioners may cultivate altered states, effect cures, or control elemental forces, but it is the shaman alone who engages primarily in "journeys of the soul." Eliade wrote: "As for the shamanic techniques of ecstasy, they do not exhaust all the varieties of ecstatic experience documented in the history of religions and religious ethnology. Hence any ecstatic cannot be considered a shaman; the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld." (p. 5) Trance journeys typically involve meetings with spirit familiars which manifest as animals, usually birds.

Moreover, the shamanic journeys are pragmatic to the point of being defined by their goals, what are often spoken of by anthropologists as relating to placating angry spirits, guiding lost souls, or the tribe's quest for food. Such surface reportage misses the deeper mission of the shaman, which is to restore natural, psychological, or social balances disrupted by interference from human or divine actions.

---

[18] "Ecstasy" here does not refer to intense joy but to the condition of "standing outside" of oneself—as the Greek roots of the word suggest. *Dissociation* is thus the critical feature of the shaman's central act, and from all reports it is seldom even remotely pleasurable.

Thus an accurate if generalized definition of "shaman" can be given as: A person who enters an altered state of consciousness *at will* for the purpose of healing, gaining power, of acquiring knowledge. The real-life induction or implementation of this state, however, varies widely, so that the apparent multiplicity of shamanic practice/procedure can obscure the essential unity of the phenomenon. Detailed accounts of drumming, dancing, chanting, and sensory deprivation fill volumes of academic work on the subject (Eliade devotes most of a chapter to the symbology of the markings on shamans' rattles, for example). Even more numerous are studies of ritual drug use and literal dreaming — natural or psychotropically assisted.[19] Again, preoccupation with surface features almost invariably cloaks the core process, which is not (actual or imaginary) movement through space but rather through mythic time.

---

[19] There have been several books devoted solely to religious ethnobotany. Among the best-known shamanically oriented ones are Weston LaBarr, *The Peyote Cult*, 5th edition (University of Oklahoma, 1989) and Michael J. Harner, ed., *Hallucinogens and Shamanism* (Oxford University Press, 1981), as well as the various popularizations by R. Gordon Wasson. A great deal of public interest was also generated by the initial volumes of the best-selling fictional "Don Juan" series by Carlos Castaneda in the early 1970s, so that in many people's minds shamanism is inextricably tied to ceremonial drug use. Current mass market and academic publications addressing shamanism continue to emphasize the presence of hallucinogenic flora in the religious-ritualistic experience of aboriginal societies. For a typical treatment of the issues see Michael Rapinsky-Naxon, *The Nature of Shamanism: Substance and Function of a Religious Metaphor* (SUNY, 1993),

2. **Therapy**. Of the many possible functions a shaman may discharge — priest, politician, judge, prognosticator, medium, and so on — it is his position as *doctor* that is called up most often and which therefore defines him functionally above all the others. Dealing with illness is the shamanic specialty par excellence. Indeed, successfully dealing with his own inaugural sickness often constitutes the transitional key in becoming a shaman.

Although traditional shamans may certainly practice physical medicine (massage, herbs, surgery) their primary role always gravitates to psychological interventions — as Lévi-Strauss observed. Exorcism, cathartic confession, the use of placebos, and many other techniques have been documented and described as representative. However, as with our understanding of shamanic ecstasy, a less superficial operation substructure awaits discovery here. Very generally in the shamanic world view, all forms of suffering and "disease" are diagnosed as powerlessness secondary to fragmentation or dissociation, be it individual or transindividual. The remedy in all cases is to

---

especially chapters 5 and 6.

restore power to the patient by effecting the pertinent realignments: dietary, sexual, emotional — and commonly linguistic. Descriptions of the ritual means include restoring a vital soul, retrieving a guardian spirit, or instructing in ceremonial practices that return power. Beneath these metaphors lie symbolically mediated mechanisms of restoring social health or political control whenever cultural resources come under stress or are deleted.

> The shaman, then, is recovering and reestablishing equilibrium in many ways at the same time. As a connection figure, he is at once the restorer of balance and the symbol of the balance. In his cosmic undertakings, his personal destiny mirrors his profession and the microcosm and macrocosm are united by his activities.[20]

3. **Initiation.** Like much else, shamanism is often demarcated through the specifics of its genesis. Standard scholarship distinguishes several ways a person may become a shaman: hereditary transmission, formal apprenticeship, and spontaneous transformation ("calling") account for the majority of cases. In

---

[20] Barbara G. Myerhoff, "Shamanic Equilibrium: Balance and Mediation in Known and Unknown Worlds" in Wayland D. Hand, ed., *American Folk Medicine: A Symposium* (University of California Press, 1976) p. 100. Asen Balikci gives a similar summary of the shaman's pivotal role at the hub of the tribe's cosmology. Speaking of (Inuit) Netsilik, he says: "The shamans where the people who brought the world together.... In his role as integrator, in a stream of symbolic effusions, the shaman gave meaning to a multiplicity of situations which would have remained inexplicable to society without his intervention." *The Netsilik Eskimo* (New York, 1970) pp. 237-238.

the first two ways, arduous and lengthy training in shamanic techniques, names and functions of spirits, mythology and genealogy of the clan, secret language, etc. under the tutelage of an experienced professional would be followed by additional instruction directly from the inhabitants of the "spirit world" with whom the business of the future practitioner will be. This two-fold course of preparation either constitutes or is followed by a rite of passage, which consisted perhaps of a protracted series of ordeals. The ordeals very commonly occur in the context of a *quest*, a period of solitary wandering undertaken by the candidate and characterized by extreme physical hardships, fasting, sleep deprivation,1 and the like. The collective degree of difficulty of this process stands in direct proportion to the powers that can be subsequently called upon.

The third main avenue, becoming a shaman through seemingly spontaneous ordination or self selection, is far from uncommon, although some cultures believe graduates of this school to be inherently less potent masters than those of the first two. Here formal stages of preparation do not occur, the person is suddenly presented with the ordeal or quest directly and (if they survive) in consequence finds himself in possession of the appropriate abilities. Sometimes the entire experience occurs in an ecstatic or dream state; an Old Testament echo of this is in *Numbers 12:6*—

"If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream." Regardless of the manner of selection, the essence of the shaman's transitional ordeal remains a profound personal crisis or trauma, generally psychic or spiritual, but always with a medical component. The true significance of this initiatory illness is that the shaman cures himself as proof of his immanent therapeutic abilities, in particular the ability to manage and resolve episodes of distress.

The initiation crisis usually announces itself shortly after adolescence, with an onslaught of peculiar psychological and somatic experiences including at least heightened sensitivity and perception but usually encompassing seizures, unconsciousness, erratic — even life threatening — behavior and grave idiopathic intractable illness. Symptoms typically become so severe that the process is openly referred to as one of death and rebirth.[21] Hallucinations of dismemberment and reconstitution are standard, and are commonly explicated by psychologists as signs of identity transformations secondary to real or imagined trauma.

Such, then, are the more-or-less universal surface features of shamanism as they are reported by the scientific literature.[22] Of them, the most germane to the question of Shevchenko's spiritual-textual faculties turns out to appertain to the therapeutic aspects — although both the shamanic initiation and the dream-flight are clearly attested in his verse.

---

[21] This is exactly the experience Shevchenko describes in his poem "N. N." ("Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo..."); see the discussion beginning on page 81 in chapter four.

But it is not only these formal isomorphisms which count towards an understanding of the shamanic literary mode. For although personal experience is the prime determinant, shamanism is not mere experience but *directed* experience. Just as one can have shamanic experiences without being a shaman, so an appropriately configured assembly of select sensibilities found within a given individual may set off a series of effects consistent with those following "official" shamanic ministrations. Experiential directedness, in other words, provokes reactive cascades in those exposed to them. The nature of such reactions will vary with the medium through which the shaman's experiential performance is discharged. In the case of

---

[22] Widespread and uniform though these features may be, there is no evidence that the shamans themselves are a homogenous group. Beyond the attributes enumerated, a practicing shaman almost invariably specializes. The degree of a shaman's personal stake in the outcome of his ministrations varies from complete altruism to outright rapacity, sometimes in the same person. Resistance to the profession's summons is common, so that the shaman may practice only infrequently or with reluctance. An adequate discussion of these and other circumstances leading to the huge range of shamanism's observed instances lies beyond the scope and purpose of this paper.

Shevchenko, of course, the medium is literary and hence linguistic. So the links between shamanism-as-performance and shamanism-as-(psycho)therapy need to be elucidated beyond the simple descriptions normally accorded them by religious historians.

In cultural settings employing shamanism as a primary bulwark against illness, the therapies used tend to be "religious" in nature, meaning that the signs and symptoms are accounted for no so much through the procedures of bioscience (the patient's history, examination, and clinical diagnosis) but rather in terms of "supernatural" forces and entities. It has already been noted that the shaman's initiatory illness, while recognized as madness, has been seen as an inspired condition indicating blessing and priestly induction, rather than as a syndrome in need of a cure. Furthermore, research on "religiously"-based morbidity and its antidotes indicates that many of the problems encountered are not strictly speaking psychiatric at all, that what is regarded as healing does not necessarily extend to removal of symptoms. Instead, a change in the *meaning* the patient attributes to the illness occurs. In other words, in at least some cases the mechanisms of religious healing and conventional psychotherapy do not coincide.

This observation corresponds to the distinction between "disease" and "illness," two fundamental categories for conceptualizing failures of health. *Disease* refers to the biophysical condition as interpreted through a medical system's paradigm; *illness* means the individual's social and psychological response to his or her perceived biophysical condition. Thus it is possible to have disease without illness (as for example asymptomatic hypertension), or to experience illness without disease (hypochondria).[23] "Scientific" medical systems are focused almost exclusively upon diseases, with the social and psychological components of sickness generally either ignored or delegated to other specialists. Dealing with illness, by contrast (and sometimes by default), is more often the province of non-allopathic healing systems.

Given that the findings of social constructivism suggest that all experience is shaped by cognitive schemas and social practices, illness experience would seem to depend on processes of interpretation that impart meaning to signs, sensations, and the accompanying concerns. It does not matter whether these perceptions are acute and well-formed or indistinct and subliminal; the meanings given to symptoms and distress can transmute suffering by modulating the degree of disorder and confusion that exacerbates affliction. In cases where internal turmoil alone brings about malaise, recovery should be reducible to finding ways to restore inner repose and to reorientate the patient. When imbued with specific meanings, illness becomes in part *metaphor*, a rhetorical resource exploitable in the search for precisely the alteration in perceptual psycho-social response which will decisively mitigate the malady.

---

[23] These and similar ideas are developed more fully in Meredith B. McGuire, "Words of Power: Personal Empowerment and Healing" *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* vol. 7 (1983) p. 221.

Shamanic intercession into indisposition, then, becomes first a search for illness meanings which will minimize discomfort, and next a way to lend authority to those meanings, to infuse them with rhetorical force, perhaps by limiting the field of possible meanings available to a sufferer. Tension between the patient's socially-mediated view of his or her ailment and the healer's personal authority in co-interpreting that view lies at the heart of the shamanic negotiation of illness meaning. This tension exists both between subject and agent, and within each participant in the therapeutic encounter, since each faces the problem of clarifying illness signification personally. However, the fundamental experience is not symmetrical due to the power disparity of social roles and differences in outcome consequences for doctor and client.[24]

---

[24] The above lines of argument are abstracted primarily from Lawrence J. Kirmayer, "Improvisation and Authority in Illness Meaning" *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* vol. 18 (1994) p. 183.

How do shamans arbitrate the apprehension of illness meaning? Regardless of the physical paraphernalia employed (and as attested by Eliade and others, this just by itself allows a profusion of possibilities), there is invariably also a focus on ritual language use. In this context, words and speech events are believed to have special efficacy in themselves — that is, an inherent power separate from and in addition to their semantic (meaning) aspect. Insofar as there is growing evidence in the medical and sociological literature that illness and disease are closely linked with issues of power and domination,[25] it stands to reason that one of the key factors in treating illness will be the mobilization of power resources. Reasonably this may involve enhancing the individual's sense of personal empowerment — strengthening existing internal or external sources or finding new ones.

Ritual language functions as a primary mobilizer of empowerment because it both represents and objectifies power—in part a reflection of its ontological duality as cultural artifact and as a sequence of fixed sounds or graphics at once. Ritual language also sheds light on the operative cosmology of an individual or group, and produces a sense of power e.g., by naming the causes of a problem. These two themes of power and order are critical for interpreting the use of ritual language in healing.

---

[25] J. D. Freund, *The Civilized Body: Social Domination, Control, and Health* (Temple University Press, 1982).

The power brokering and structure/order inducing capacity of ritual language may be examined in terms of three facets: (1) language as an objectification of power, (2) transformative functions of ritual language, and (3) ritual language as healing-performance.[26]

Power is likely *the* fundamental commodity in interpretative healing. From this perspective, the treatment of illness comes down to the reestablishment of a balance of power by weakening the antagonist's potency or by augmenting the victim's strength. The process may be arbitrated by a ritual object (as a medium of Grace, for example) or through ritualized language (prayers, mantras, spells).

Two properties of language recommend it for embodying power. On an everyday level, words serve as a vehicle for conveying emotions, insights, experiences etc., from on person to another, thus effectively altering a portion of the audience's reality without apparently "touching" it. As threats, exhortations, entreaties, promises and other sundry utterances, words can secure astounding and immediate alternations in behavior, also with no visible physical instrument. Second, language displays considerable power in its seeming autonomy in externalizing human experience. Without necessary basis in the real world, verbal constructs nevertheless reflect and control it—yet are in no way beholden to it. The manifest power that words possess coupled with their ease of creation and transmission give rise to the concepts of "words of power" and hence to their attendant rituals.

---

[26] This formulation is adapted from the discussion on page 222 of Meredith B. McGuire, "Words of Power: Personal Empowerment and Healing" *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* vol. 7 (1983).

Transformation. Ritual words' metaphoric and metonymic functions enable them to act as surrogates, having reference both to the original object and to the symbolic object. A theory of health may be developed that identifies sickness as the eruption of conflict and divisiveness of the social system, thus casting the condition of the sick person as only symbolically expressing the circumstances in the larger social body. For example, bringing the "head" of the family (i.e., the proper father/husband authority figure) into correct alignment with its other members (the "body") may serve to alleviate their individual health problems. In evoking these dual meanings, ceremonially patterned language uses explicit healing metaphors. Subjects are typically instructed to envision something of which they want to be free (pain, fear), then to manipulate the images so as to "dissolve" them or "release them into space." Relief from symptoms follows. Such guided visualizations employ words at two distinct but parallel levels of meaning, with the subject invited to experience a change in one as simultaneous with—that is, linked to—a change in the other. In this way, a change in a *description* is equated with a change in *substance*.

Ritual language also transforms perception through its boundary maintenance function. If an individual or group observes the world as a place of grave disorder, then avoiding pain and suffering might involve moving the defense perimeter so as to exclude external chaos. Verbally adjusting the us/them border serves as a kind of semantic immunology, bolstering the self/non-self barrier in order to keep out "evil" or competing ideologies. Exorcisms, affirmations, and manifestos are typical examples of such formulaically mediated transformations.

Performance. Instances of spoken ritual language may be viewed as "performative utterances": saying the words out loud is an action carrying force which is in addition to their other properties. In part this is based on a "vibrational" theory of reality, wherein exposure to specific frequencies of, say, sonic energy may be baleful or benign. Written down, the potency of these word sounds is only made latent, not diminished. But more important is the idea that assertion of order can bring about administration of order. If illness is not so much a "thing" as a way of describing (i.e., speaking about) an individual's reaction to his or her society's particular symbolization of power, then clearly incursions into the integrity of that symbolization (for example economic stress or rapid social change) will lead to a sense of powerlessness. Since the basis for the shaman's technology is the ability to distinguish key structural symbols and to move them into a proper relationship (that is, to (re)create order), the capacity to establish order is at the root of the healing process.

Understanding this process's efficacy requires the construction of a hermeneutic of cultural rhetoric at work in the discourse of healing. The notion of a rhetoric contributes the acknowledgment that healing is contingent upon a meaningful and convincing discourse bringing about a transformation of the phenomenological conditions under which the patient lives and experiences distress. It can be shown that this rhetoric redirects supplicants' attention to new aspects of their actions and experiences, or persuades them to attend to accustomed features of action and experience from new perspectives. Since such attention constitutes the meaning of those experiences, this redirection of focus amounts to the creation of new meaning for the supplicant. To the extent that this new meaning encompasses the person's life experience, healing creates a new reality or phenomenological world. As he or she comes to inhabit this newly refurbished world, the supplicant is healed not in the sense of being restored to the state in which he existed prior to the onset of illness, but to the sense of being rhetorically "moved" into a state dissimilar from both pre-illness and illness reality. The key interpretive task is to show how this reality is constituted as a consequence of transformation of pre-pathological and pathological realities.[27]

In considering the mobilizing link between the rhetorical aspect of discourse and the therapeutic one, it seems reasonable to expect the healing-semiotic transformations to operate on multiple levels. Not only rhetorical, but any appropriately formulated rearrangement of the symbolic matrix should act on both the social level of persuasion and interpersonal influence, and the cultural level of meanings, symbols, and styles of argument. To the extent that the symbolic matrix is textually located, its custodians include legislators and the judiciary, educators, priests — and writers. All but the last of these groups either create, protect, or propagate the status quo, and are therefore necessarily conservative; literary artists, by contrast, normally have (and actively exercise) a choice of how they will relate to the existing cultural environment. Those of them who experience that environment as unbalanced, polluted, endangered, or otherwise serving as a source of grief for its inhabitants might be moved to correct — linguistically — its parameters. If they avail themselves of exterior cognitive spaces in their quests for corrective counter-parameters, they may be dependably identified as practitioners of literary shamanism.

---

[27] One of the most influential papers describing the above processes is Michael J. Csordas "The Rhetoric of Transformation in Ritual Healing" *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* vol. 7 (1983) p. 333. Csordas describes his field work studying "psycho-therapeutic ritual" among Catholic Pentecostals, the core tasks of which are to create 1.) a predisposition to healing 2.) the experience of empowerment, and 3.) the perception of personal transformation.

Chapter Three

LITERARY SHAMANISM

"In the beginning was the Word..."
—*John 1:1*

"Literary shamanism" is a union of a critical-theoretical term with a medical-anthropological one. Together they connote a realm within which it becomes meaningful to discuss what may be regarded as the "semiotic pathology" of 19th century Ukrainian self-perception and the impact of Shevchenko's verse on that pathology.[1] It further provides a framework for discussing how the composition of certain literary artifacts can function to induce discursive restructuring in their audiences, especially where such audiences are appropriately predisposed.

Of course, the phrase "semiotic pathology" as applied to representational structures such as myths or literary texts is not a diagnosis but a metaphor. It furnishes helpful analogies to the organizing principles that govern an essentially verbal design, and directs our attention to the dialectic of health and sickness exhibited by specific poetic objects, as well as the culture's responses to them. The principal task is to distinguish a literary modality whose fundamental characteristics bring about precisely the rhetorically mediated "shift" into defragmented or realigned cognitive spaces. If the writer is furthermore able to construct his or her speech acts so as to induce similar perceptual relocations in the reader, then the process becomes shamanic throughout.

---

[1] The notion of a collective deviation from the healthy development of collective identity among Ukrainians is not original with this thesis. Ralph Lindheim and George S. N. Luckyj (eds.), *Towards an Intellectual History of Ukraine: An Anthology of Ukrainian Thought from 1710 to 1995* (University of Toronto Press, 1996) have this to say on p. 46 of their introductory essay:

> Healing can only begin with courageous admission by the Ukrainians of their debilitating psychic malady. If they no longer deny the extent and complexity of the disease, then perhaps they will come to feel the shame that stirred Shevchenko and even the raged ignited in him whenever he used the word 'Little Russian.' Only after they confront fully the slave mentality imposed on them but also supported by them can they begin on the road back to statehood...

This passage discusses an article by Ievhen Malaniuk (p. 325 of the same volume) concerning these and related issues.

A systematized understanding of such subtly interstitial textual modalities is pointedly absent from mainstream literary studies, possibly because questions of rhetorical import and poetic psychodynamics have not been traditionally framed in personal-transformational terms. As seen in the previous chapter, almost all of the investigative work here has been in behavioral therapeutics and medical anthropology. This insufficiency of conceptual framework in turn mirrors the as-yet inadequate formulation of shamanology as a distinct arena of scientific inquiry apart from ethnology, and of the shaman-figure as a legitimate target for hard research (as opposed to the routine cataloguing of shamanic paraphernalia).

The present monograph does not set out to generate a comprehensive theoretical foundation of this kind. However, in endeavoring to attest to a shamanic mode in Shevchenko, it can suggest ways of thinking about a methodological substructure. Some work, however sporadic, has already been done on literary texts as shamanic artifacts, and at least a few ideas have been proposed and positioned. These will serve as a point of departure for subsequent discussion.

The association between literary creation and ecstatic transport was intuited from earliest times. Plato was cognizant of the poet's role as seer and of that role's dependence on the attainment of non-ordinary states.

> For the epic poets, all the good ones, have their excellence, not for art, but are inspired, possessed, and thus they utter all these admirable poems. So it is also with the good lyric poets; as the worshiping Corybantes are not in their senses when they dance, so the lyric poets are not in their senses when they make these lovely lyric poems. No, once they launch into harmony and rhythm, they are seized with the Bacchic transport and are possessed... [F]or a poet is a light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself and reason is no longer in him. So long as he has this in his possession, no man is able to make poetry or to chant in prophecy.[2]

---

[2] Plato, *Ion* 534ab (Lane Cooper, transl.), in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* Bollingen Series LXXI (Princeton, 1961) p. 220. In this dialogue Plato also proposes his analogy of the magnet to explain both audience

Classical antiquity understood art as a product or facet of "a man-made dream for waking eyes," which state arises at the interface of the physical world and "divine contrivance."[3] Plato's basic ontology, that of Form or Idea, displays the same hierarchic structure as shamanic cosmology: events in dream-time have primacy or causative force over events in "real" (ordinary) life, are prototypes from which the empirical world is fashioned. The Platonic doctrine of artistic mimesis rests on a similar model, wherein an object of artistic creation is only a shadow, an imperfect approximation of an entity at a "higher" plane of existence.[4] Thus there is a link between one of the earliest

---

response and how artists influence one another.

> "Well, do you see that the spectator is the last of the iron rings I spoke of, which receive their force from one another by virtue of the loadstone? You, the rhapsodist and actor, are the middle ring, and the first one is the poet himself. But it is the deity who, through all the series, draws the spirit of men wherever he desires, transmitting the attractive force from one into another." (536a, pp. 221-222)

This is not merely an affective theory. Plato suggests that the quality he calls "possession" is actually *transferred to the audience* (he has Socrates explain that this possession is more in the nature of "being held fast" by, say, Orpheus or Homer).

[3] Plato, *The Sophist* 266bc. Another term used in this passage is "dream images."

[4] Of course there are differences in intellectual position between the later and earlier dialogues, the dividing line being approximately *Theaetetus* (ca. 368 B.C.). The theory of Forms belongs to the early period.

intellectual formulations of the nature of art and the shamanic world view. Both posit multiple — or more exactly bipolar — spheres of reality, and both charge a human intermediary with the task of making journeys between these spheres to bring something back with them.

Departing perhaps from this point, some researchers have essayed arguments for an even more primordial role for shamanism. According to these, archaic proto-shamanic visual imagery (such as that in the famous paleolithic cave paintings of western Europe) may be the antecedents of human speech and hence consciousness as we know it today.

> The mythmaking mind exhibits a sort of consciousness of the relationship between its product and the phenomenon of language, though characteristically it can express this relationship not in abstract logical terms, but only in images. It transforms the spiritual dawn which takes place with the advent of language into an objective fact... This emergence from the vague fullness of existence into a world of clear, verbally determinable forms, is represented in the mythic mode.[5]

A related but somewhat more plausible idea coming from E. T. Kirby (as one example among many others) situates shamanic ritual as the forerunner of the dramatic literary forms. He actually argues that historically *all* entertainment arts—puppetry, acrobatics, conjuring, ventriloquism, clowning (to say nothing of dance and stagecraft)—established themselves as adaptations of shamanic activities. "In a sense, shamanistic ritual was the "great unitarian artwork" that fragmented into a number of performance arts, much as Wagner believed had been the case with ancient Greek tragedy."[6] Kirby clearly lays out the affinity of the core mechanism underlying both pursuits: "The fundamental relationship of shamanism to the performing arts of a primitive culture is most often established by its relationship to the dream and to the dream-like psychotic episode which lie at the source of creativity."[7]

---

[5] Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth* (N.Y. 1946) p. 81. See also Anne Bancroft, *Origins of the Sacred: The Spiritual Journey in Western Tradition* (London, 1987) for an argument submitting a shamanic origin for all religion.

Kirby also ties together the curative and audience-response aspects of the two performative modalities.

> That shamanic performance may be considered the ur-theatre or prototheatre implies a very important distinction. Shamanistic ritual is unlike rites-of-passage or other forms of what may be called ceremonial ritual in that it depends upon the immediate and direct manifestation to the audience of supernatural presence, rather than its symbolization. All ritual and ceremony can be theatrical, but the theatricality of shamanistic ritual is related to its function in a particular way. In order to effect a cure of the patient, belief in what is happening must be held,

---

[6] E. T. Kirby, "The Shamanistic Origins of Theatre" *The Drama Review* vol. 18 (March, 1974) p. 6. Kirby rejects theories of drama as rooted in mime or play as not having "actual anthropological validity." (p. 14)

[7] E. T. Kirby, *Ur-Drama: The Origins of Theatre* (New York University Press, 1975) p.20.

> reinforced, and intensified, not only in the patient, but in the audience as well, for their experience contributes directly to the effect. The audience actively reinforces the experience of the patient, and its own belief in a particular world view or cosmology is in turn reinforced by direct experience of it. Shamanistic theatre, founded upon manifestation of supernatural presence, developed from a small curing seance, which in effect needs only patient and shaman as participants, but actually depends upon an audience. This leads to more elaborate curing ceremonies and to rituals and trance dances for curing, exorcism, and other purposes. This complex develops finally into performances which are purely theatre, spectacles from which the functional element has disappeared. (Kirby, *Ur-Drama* pp. 2-3)

Despite the questionable claim that "the functional element has disappeared" from theatrical performance, ideas like Kirby's are completely congruent with the Platonic account of artistic genesis, an account which influenced subsequent thinking on the subject very deeply.

A widespread initiative towards geographical exploration and description of remote lands in the early 18th century quickly led to an intense interest in things shamanic, especially among European intellectuals.[8] Johann Gottfried Herder was one of the first to introduce the newly-arrived information into his theories of literature. In his impassioned and influential privileging of the *Volksgeist* when laying the foundations for what would become nationalistic-Romanticism, Herder located in the shaman precisely Plato's divinely magnetized intermediary responsible for binding together human culture.

---

[8] A very detailed study of the entry of the shamanic phenomenon into the consciousness and academic practice of Europe can be found in Gloria Flaherty, *Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton University Press, 1992).

> Do you believe that Orpheus, the great Orpheus, eternally worthy of mankind, the poet in whose interior remnants the entire soul of nature lives, that he was originally something other than the noblest shaman that Thrace, at the time also northern Tatary, could have seen?[9]

Herder's thesis propounded shamanism as a factor crucial to the survival of all human societies. He considered shamans responsible for creating order out of chaos, for originating music, medicine, codes of behavior, writing—all the things that contributed to stable social frameworks.[10] As the inventor of the alphabet, the shaman retained control over magic words, spells, incantations, a legacy that Herder saw passing from the ancient sacerdote into the hands of the contemporary bard in an unbroken line. In an essay appearing in *Deutsches Museum* in 1777 ("Von Ähnlichkeit der mittlern englischen und deutschen Dichtkunst, nebst Verschiednem, das daraus folget") he equated writers like Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare with the magically empowered skalds and bards of earlier ages in northern Europe. Herder even postulated a line of descent from the most archaic shamans of the East to those like Orpheus and then on to the Romans, and from them to the troubadours and minstrels of the European Middle Ages.[11]

---

[9] Johann Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, Bernhard Suphan, ed. (Berlin, 1883) vol. 25 p. 84. The English translations are taken from Gloria Flaherty, *Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century*. Here and elsewhere when referring to shamans Herder used the German word *edel* to mean not merely "noble" but also just, humane, and magnanimous.

[10] Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, Vol. 6, pp. 284-5

In addition to producing, nurturing, and protecting civilization, Herder's shaman-poet could also have positive effects on an individual's psychology and even physiology. In *Ueber die Würkung der Dichtkunst auf die Sitten der Völker in alten und neuen Zeiten* he conflated the poet, shaman, and mediator as the channeler of language that enables human beings to open up to things greater than themselves. Such collective participation, he argued, increased the profundity of the poetic experience.[12]

Herder's preoccupation with the promotion of the shaman's role in human culture and especially language did much to position the poet as the carrier-expounder of the mythical, the irrational, and the natural. His most complete summary of shamanism, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, was if not actually written with Goethe's help, then at least regularly discussed with Goethe during its composition and re-read by the poet in its published version.[13]

---

[11] Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, Vol 9, p 531.

> For Herder, the artist was a shaman, that is, a poet, singer, actor, prophet, seer, healer. He cited numerous illustrations from different cultures in several epochs, but he repeatedly came back to the original singer, Orpheus, as the epitome of the shaman. ... [T]he Greek poets, he maintained, were never completely separated from nature, they were all "edle griechische Schamanen."

(Gloria Flaherty, "The Performing Artist as the Shaman of Higher Civilization" *MLN* vol. 103 no. 3 (April, 1988) p. 535.)

[12] Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 8, p. 340. The original work was composed in 1778.

For his own part, Goethe also believed firmly in the role of spiritual forces in literary creativity, and spoke of this in a manner similar to that of Plato in the *Ion*. "In poetry, especially in that which is unconscious, before which reason and understanding fall short, and which therefore produces effects far surpassing all conception, there is always something demonic."[14] In this connection Goethe named Raphael, Shakespeare, and Mozart, as well as Benvenuto Cellini, a writer who described his visions and out-of-body experiences in his autobiography (which was translated by Goethe) as "movements between worlds."

Goethe familiarized himself with shamanism through both fact and fiction, and freely availed himself of this knowledge in his own literary productions. The protagonist of his famous *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, for example, exhibits a veritable catalogue of easily recognized shamanic characteristics, including the propensity to ritualized play-acting, fantasy, excessive emotional introspection, trances, animistic beliefs, flight dreams, somnambulism... All of Werther's existence is suffused with the very elements which to the 18th century mind constituted the essence of shamanism. In fact, Goethe's fictional character exemplifies exactly an unsuccessful shaman as described by participants of the numerous "academic" expeditions of the time.

---

[13] Detailed in Goethe's letter to Wieland of April 1776; Werner Dankert, *Goethe: Der Mythische Urgrund seiner Weltschau* (Berlin, 1951) p. 163.

[14] Goethe, *Conversations* p. 527. *Gedenkausgabe* March 8, 1831, 24:472

> All the trancelike states that Goethe has his Werther work himself into fail to unleash the kind of poetic, musical, mimetic, and dramatic gifts that might enable him to cure his own self-induced madness and self-destructive tendencies. Nor is Werther capable of transmitting his trance to others so that something generally beneficial results for the whole tribe or society.[15]

Quite a number of Goethe's works (*Der Zauberlehrling*, *Epimenides Erwachen*, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, to name just a few) abound in shamanic themes and motifs, especially those having to do with acting and drama. Examining the interplay of these elements allows a subspecies of myth-critical or archetypal hermeneutics, which may point to the presence of shamanic conditions in the writer's own life, and hence to shamanic circumstances contributing to a given work's composition.[16]

---

[15] Gloria Flaherty, *Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century* p. 178. As will be seen, Shevchenko also shows some clear characteristics of a shaman manqué.

If writers like Goethe could mine their own (largely intellectual) understanding of shamanism to create correspondingly endowed characters and situations, it was not a great feat for others to essay recreating the shamanic experience for and within themselves in order to enhance literary creativity. An almost studied example is that of Arthur Rimbaud. Where "traditional" shamans expanded and strengthened their perceptual faculties through hallucinogens, solitude, and sensory deprivation, Rimbaud used opium, hashish, alcohol, and sex in order to circumvent the rational mind and thus to obtain a vision of non-ordinary reality. In a letter to his mentor Georges Izambard, the poet wrote:

> I am degrading myself as much as possible. Why? I want to be a poet, and I am working to make myself a seer.... It is a question of reaching the unknown by the derangement of all the senses. The sufferings are enormous, but one has to be strong, one has to be born a poet, and I know I am a poet. This is not at all my fault. It is wrong to say: I think. One ought to say; people think

---

[16] Goethe's *Faust* is examined in exactly this way in chapter eight ("Faust, the Modern Shaman") of Flaherty's book. Brief summaries of shamanic readings of some of his other works appear in the 7th chapter ("Shamans in Goethe") as well.

> me. Pardon the pun.[17]

Rimbaud's ensuing ecstatic experiences find concentrated expression in the fragmentary and highly ambiguous *Illuminations* (1872), a book which changed the course of French poetry in the late nineteenth century. Rimbaud understood that the visions he brought back necessitated a new language, one which would reflect whatever non-ordinary reality needed to be interpolated into the existing symbolic order. The "Illuminations" are a series of flashes, similar to stream-of-consciousness, which are in part a rendering of the author's hallucinatory voyages to the lower and upper realms of non-ordinary reality, and are comparable to shamanic accounts of similar journeys.

> At a tremendous distance above my subterranean room, houses grow like plants, and fogs gather. The mud is red or black. Monstrous city! Endless night!
>
> Not so high up are the sewers.... Perhaps there are pits

---

[17] Arthur Rimbaud, *Complete Works, Selected Poems*, Wallace Fowlie, transl. (University of Chicago Press, 1967) p. 303.

> Maintenant, je m'encrapule le plus possible. Pourquoi? Je veux être poète, et je travaille à me rendre *voyant*... Il s'agit d'arriver à l'inconnu par le dérèglement de *tous les sens*. Les souffrances sont énormes, mais il faut être fort, être né poète, et je me suis reconnu poète. Ce n'est pas du tout ma faute. C'est faux de dire: Je pense. On devrait dire: On me pense. Pardon du jeu de mots.

The pun is "penser" (to think) and "panser" (to groom a horse).

> of azure and wells of fire?[18]

Rimbaud's poetic narrative is correlative to a shamanic trance-journey not only in its description of the upper and lower regions of consciousness and myth-time, but also because he saw these regions as structured into various levels.

Another shamanic theme in the "Illuminations" is the poet's taking on animal forms, the very shape-shifting that figures so prominently in the practices of professional shamans.

> Reality being too prickly for my lofty character, I became at my lady's a big blue-grey bird flying up near the moldings of the ceiling and dragging my wings after me in the shadows of the evening.
>
> At the foot of the baldaquino supporting her precious jewels and her physical masterpieces I was a fat bear with purple gums and thick sorry-looking fur, my eyes of crystal and silver from the consoles.[19]

Shevchenko's descriptions in this regard include conversations with animal spirit-familiars, receiving counsel from them with respect to specific questions.

Rimbaud could not sustain the intensity of the transitions between worlds and instead opted for a career as gunrunner and slave trader. In the "Farewell" section of "Une Saison en Enfer" he noted: "I who call myself magus or angel, exempt from all morality, am thrown back to the earth, with a duty to find, and rough reality to embrace! Peasant!"[20] Although no longer interested in undergoing a "derangement of all the senses" himself, Rimbaud still held to the idea, shared with Baudelaire, that genius lies not so much in the power of invention as in the faculty of perception. Speaking about Baudelaire in one of his letters, Rimbaud shows his awareness of the difficulties innate in inhabiting multiple worlds and having to struggle with novel ways of expressing what he finds in the "unknown" ones among them.

---

[18] Rimbaud, *Complete Works* p. 175, 177.

[19] p. 227

> But since inspecting the invisible and hearing the unheard of is different from recovering the spirit of dead things, Baudelaire is the first seer, king of poets, *a real god!* And yet he lived in too artistic a world; and the form so highly praised in him is trivial. Inventions of the unknown call for new forms.[21]

Rimbaud's vision of the poet as a trance-journeying seer are consonant with (and indeed contribute to) the standard features to which the poetics of late Romanticism lay claim. How such an insight may also transcend these claims will be examined in chapter seven.

The validity of shamanic reading of literary texts grounds itself not only in attesting elements identified by anthropologists as belonging to a particular magico-religious repertoire, but also in confirming that those elements relate to one another in explicit ways, i.e. participate in a system exhibiting functional shamanic traits. Thus it is not enough that a literary character or his creator should enter trance states or consort with animals; the trance has to be a quest-for-knowledge journey, and the animals should perform duties of guides or teachers. Where such schemes can be demonstrated, there is a prima facie case for examining the text from a shaman-oriented perspective.

---

[20] p. 209. Shevchenko too had the peasant as one of his two antipodes which between them generated his shamanic states.

[21] p. 311. In the same letter Rimbaud talks about the perils of poetic soul-journeys, explaining that when a writer reaches "the unknown," "he ends by losing the intelligence of his visions."

Even more usefully than pointing out the reflexes of shamanism in collections of literary objects, a shamanically-oriented hermeneutics correlates these textual loci with social or psychological contexts which might be expected to call for restorative manoeuvers. Such contexts might locate themselves in the writer's psychology or political situation, with the former at times being induced by the latter. Typically, this dynamic manifests during periods of excessively rapid or intense metamorphosis, change which does not allow for timely assimilation and thus threatens to disrupt the stability of prevailing arrangements. When the disruption affects a symbolic order (personal, institutional) and grows severe enough, the underlying myth-structures may be threatened. The disruption may be quelled and mythic integrity restored by enlisting the services of a mythopoetic specialist, one skilled in reconditioning outdated symbolic structures to better accord with immediate circumstances: a priest, psychiatrist, prophet—or poet.

Such situations arise particularly in times of crisis, moments of (perhaps ritual) progression between structural states or in the decisive "rites of passage" in personal or collective history. Established systems find the lability of such moments threatening, and try to counter their effects by turning to (or establishing) stable social structures, such as churches or other tradition-oriented institutions. Yet during the passage between structural states—when a culture is in rapid disintegration or historical flux—the individual visionary can provide solutions to social problems with which the establishment seems ill-equipped to deal. During the visionary trance such a person manages to formulate the internally satisfying patterns he needs to achieve equilibrium. If enough elements of this new structure attract the wider community and awaken sympathetic responses through the visionary's charisma or (as in the case of Shevchenko) a written account of his experiences, a coterie of devotees forms and a cult following ensues.

Modern scholarly investigations of literary shamanism are neither widespread nor entirely unknown.[22] One eminent poet to whom all the above parameters—shamanic motifs, experiences, and function (i.e., that of restoring original personal and public psychological balance)—have been shown to apply is W. B. Yeats. Ted Spivey details Yeats's technique of cyclic withdrawal and return to the world, his awareness of the relationship between personal purification (struggle with psychic illness) and literary creation, and specific instances of trance-journey later described in numerous poems.

---

[22] A few poets have had monographs devoted to the shamanic aspects of their poetry (for example George B. Hutchison, *The Ecstatic Whitman: Literary Shamanism and the Crisis of Union*, Ohio

> Yeats records in "Demon and Beast," and other poems, moments of liberty and joy, which testify to his ability to enter, briefly at least, into the shamanic ecstasy.... By ending the poem with a reference to St. Anthony, Yeats reveals the kind of modern shamanic vision that we find in both Eliade and Jung, a vision which allows them in their work to move freely from their own moments of higher consciousness to inspired insights into many different spiritual traditions.[23]

Spivey also finds recreations of shamanic rituals in "Sailing to Byzantium," personal experience of apocalyptic death-and-rebirth in "The Second Coming," and the practice of meditation

---

State University Press, 1986). For the most part these have been hampered by the assumption that the poet is a "modern" man who "uses" tribal myths and rituals, sprinkling them throughout the verse as pointers to the exotic but without invoking any of their original spiritual significance. Thus the "shamanic" content of such poetry becomes reducible to its being a display-case of the appropriate objects.

[23] Ted R. Spivey, *Beyond Modernism: Towards a New Myth Criticism* (University Press of America, Lantham MD 1988) p. 86. Separate chapters are devoted to shamanically oriented discussions of Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, and Wallace Stevens.

used by the poet to induce shamanic visions for composing works like "Leda and the Swan."

Whether the relatively mechanical gathering of parallels of this type meaningfully translates into a "shamanic" understanding of a writer or literary work remains contentious. Objections have been raised to the effect that shamanism became a "hot topic" in academic terminology at least as far back as the 1960s merely in response to mass media popularization. Gloria Flaherty writes:

> By the mid 1970's, French intellectuals had so often invoked the word "shaman" in their debates as to make it a kind of theoretical buzz word. Roland Barthes, focussing on the subject of voice in "The Death of the Author," for example, had written that "in primitive societies, narrative is never undertaken by a person, but by a mediator, a shaman or speaker, whose 'performance' may be admired (that is, his mastery of the narrative code), but not his 'genius.' " Barthes does not, however, detail what he understood or meant by that still rather elusive word "shaman."[24]

Flaherty goes on to excoriate a number of commentators who have co-opted the term as a key ingredient in their discussions of post-modernism, charging that none of them "has, however, shown any historical accountability for their use of that vocabulary. Not one of them has offered a precise explanation of just what is meant within which context." ("The Performing Artist," pp. 523-525)

---

[24] Gloria Flaherty, "The Performing Artist" p. 523. The embedded quote is from Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," Richard Howard transl. [*Aspen Magazine*, III, 5-6 (1968)], *The Discontinuous Universe, Selected Writings in Contemporary Consciousness* Sallie Sears and Georgianna W. Lord eds., (New York, 1972) p. 8.

The reception of the writer as a shamanic figure, then, is not particularly well conceptualized in academic practice. What *has* been accomplished is a thorough and systematic description of the shaman's characteristics, his tools and methods, and the all-important soul-journey that is deliberately undertaken with express intent and uniform outcome. But it is one thing to attest the presence of shamanic reflexes, and quite another to map these reflexes onto a textually operating sociocultural mode in any independently meaningful way. The present discussion of Shevchenko, therefore, begins by building the evidence that literary shamanism functions very much like "regular" shamanism, at least at a deep structural level. Just as certain classes of compromised health states can be mitigated through methodical restructuring of personal or tribal illness-myths, so the trauma of destabilized symbolic environments (secondary to social or political upheavals) is amenable to rhetorical palliation and cure. The rules of perception-manipulation are much the same; what differs is which tokens are being moved around in each case. A tribal shaman first names, then exorcises the malevolent influence via restoration of pre-illness patient empowerment. A literary shaman effects a similar re-ordering of the symbolic milieu by means of rhetorical shifts between incompatible textual spaces — perhaps by creating or implementing "new" language resources. Both offer cognitively mediated interventions into mythic impairments.

How exactly this takes place in the case of Shevchenko is presented in some detail in the next two chapters.

Chapter Four

SHEVCHENKO AS SHAMAN

"Poetry is the displaced prophetic vocation." —*Ernst Bloch*

To ask whether Taras Shevchenko formally practiced or received training in any traditional version of tribal shamanism would be to misapprehend the central methodology submitted by the present inquiry. The question is not whether Shevchenko "was a shaman" in the literal sense. What is at issue is how a knowledge of certain determinant characteristics of the multiform phenomenon collectively and somewhat loosely known as shamanism might lead to an enhanced understanding of specific aspects of Shevchenko reception. To this end the poet's shamanic modality may be discerned at two levels. The more superficial level of the two involves reviewing the evidence in Shevchenko's texts which indicate circumstances of composition congruent with a shaman's distinctive inner state and personal development history; a deeper dynamic reveals shamanic *functionality* in discrete text elements, their interrelationships, and reception.

The first stage of Shevchenko's shamanic literary mode roots itself in a specialized application of myth criticism. We already have a mythopoetic understanding of Shevchenko, pioneered by George Grabowicz in his book *The Poet As Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Ševčenko*, where he details the code structures built into the poetry. Central among these structures is the notion of *communitas* — a notion formulated by anthropologist Victor Turner referring to a vision of human society that is undifferentiated and ideal, not marked by hierarchic categories, regulatory policing, or private property.[1] As such, *communitas* opposes itself to *structure;* one of Turner's terms for communitas is in fact "anti-structure."

Grabowicz devotes considerable space to the role of communitas in Shevchenko's poetry, analyzing some of the numerous passages which describe this non-structured state and showing how they tend to mold an aggregate image of the Ukrainian past.

У Києві на Подолі
Братерськая наша воля
Вез холопа і без пана,
Сама собі у жупані
Розвернулася весела,
Аксамитом шляхи стеле,
А єдвабном застилає

---

[1] A good source on the concept of communitas is Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Chicago, 1969). For example on page 126:

> communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority. It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or "holy," possible because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency.

I нікому не звертає.[2]
(lines 9-16)

Lines 10 and 11 from "Чернець" ("The Monk") above characterize the "free fraternity" as having "no serf or lord," exactly the social leveling that defines communitas. As Grabowicz notes, the poem goes beyond capturing an ethos of deep-rooted freedom, spontaneous equality, and expansive emotion. It shows its protagonist, Palij, as one who in the isolation of a monk's cell is able to bring to life persons and events constituting a vanished Cossack past.

I в келії, неначе в Січі,
Братерство славне ожива.
А сивий гетьман, мов сова,
Ченцеві зазирає в вічі.
(lines 89-92)

According to Grabowicz "these and other features make Palij . . . a symbolic projection of the poet himself." (*PAM* p. 83). It is also worth observing that this activity is overtly shamanic, including as it does such standard items as the appearance of the old Cossack's hetman in the form of the spirit-familiar owl (line 91). We will examine the shamanic architecture of "The Monk" more closely in later chapters.

The systemic function of the communitas concept in the *Kobzar* as it relates to shamanism eventually warrants a much deeper commentary, but for now it will suffice to point out that communitas, in Turner's formulation as well as in Grabowicz's, emerges from the limen, the state of transition brought out during the rites of passage identified by studies of cultures and societies.[3] In this context Turner proposes an interplay of two opposed schemata governing human relations.

---

[2] Unless otherwise specified, the source of Shevchenko's original texts is *Povne zibrannia tvoriv u dvanadtsiaty tomax* (Kyiv, 1989) volumes one and two. Where supplied, all translations of this material into English are my own.

> The first is of society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of "more" or "less." The second, which emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals...[4]

Thus for Shevchenko "[Ukraine's] passage into a different state of being," as Grabowicz puts it, is what produces the focus on liminality.[5]

---

[3] The term "limen" is taken here from its use in the psychological sciences. It refers to a threshold in the sense of a point at which the quantity of a stimulus or other input becomes sufficient to begin to register a response. In Turner's application, the reference is to collective behavior.

> "It means a moment when things are betwixt and between, when old structures have broken down and new ones have not yet been created. Historically, these times of change are the times of greatest cultural creativity... [N]ew cultural symbols and meanings can emerge. Liminal moments are times of tension, extreme reactions, and great opportunity."

Sherry Turkle, quoted in Jill Greenberg, "Sex, Lies, and Avatars" *Wired* (4.04, April 1996) page 108.

[4] *The Ritual Process*, p.96. Emphasis in original.

The "different state of being" that Shevchenko was almost certainly responding to had both personal and historic components. Ukraine's political identity in the early nineteenth century was almost entirely informed by the aftershocks of the liquidation of the hetman state in the 1775-1778 period, especially the ensuing incursions into Ukrainian sovereignty by neighbouring powers. Sudden military impotence, the loss of all property and personal freedoms attendant on the institution of serfdom, a draconian abridgement of rights and opportunities coupled with a real and perceived annulment of past attainments placed the country's sense of internal order into crisis—to say the least. Concurrently, Shevchenko was personally experiencing a no lesser (and in some ways opposite) transition, proceeding from his birth-legacy as a slave to claim his place in the system that had enslaved him. Just as Shevchenko experienced two distinct spheres of existence in his own life, so his country was concurrently undergoing (or attempting to adjust after the fact) a harsh transition from a state of self-determination and power to one of subjugated, colonial status. The poet's serf/Ukrainian self as opposed to his St. Petersburg identity as a celebrity-socialite is the communitas-structure dichotomy paralleled by Ukraine's unresolved discord between a "Cossack past" self-perception and her newly acquired station of exploited, state-less nation.

---

[5] *PAM* p.78. In a note on this same page Grabowicz quotes Victor Turner: "Liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art." (*The Ritual Process*, p. 128)

Investigating the relationship between these two sets of polarized identities (Shevchenko's and Ukraine's) yields rich insights into the principles determining Shevchenko's creative world. The evidence for "adjusted" vs. "non-adjusted" selves in the poetry has already been presented by Grabowicz.[6] A 1990 article by Oksana Zabuzhko in *Slovo i chas*, after summarizing Ukraine's transition from a period of flourishing military and political growth in the 18th century to one of "being swallowed and digested by Russia" by the early 19th (centralization and bureaucratization of education, religious life, etc.) makes the following observation:

> Put differently, at the beginning of the 19th century —at the time of the formation of Shevchenko's artistic individuality—Ukraine presented a classic example of an "ahistorical people." In such a people the place of

---

[6] *PAM*, especially pp. 8-10. Additional examples of exactly this duality may be found in the prose works as well. In the short piece entitled "Autobiography," for instance, the third-person subject (i.e., Shevchenko) is referred to by hyphenated labels when describing his serf years, but only by the pronoun "he" in the sections speaking of his life in St. Petersburg.

> historical consciousness is invariably taken by mythopoesis, as compensation for fear before history (M. Eliade).[7]

It fell to Shevchenko, then, to act as intermediary between a vanished world — not a historical period but an ideal, utopian state of being — and the then-current circumstances of being Ukrainian. The difficulties of this dislocation, both individual and transpersonal, were to be mitigated by re-entering the state of communitas and obtaining re-empowerment there. Bringing the results of this exercise to his people took the shape of poetry production, and completed the standard progression of shamanic intervention.

As has been discussed earlier, a key invariant of the shaman's specialized abilities is their link to the "call" or initiation that such individuals receive, often apparently spontaneously and usually early in their lives, and commonly associated with transformatory trauma followed by recovery through reconstitution. Shevchenko's short pseudo-biographical piece "N. N." ("Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo") may be construed as a stylized account of shamanic initiation. The requisite elements appear in perfect textbook sequence: the young, marginally socialized candidate, psycho-physical trauma, symbolic rebirth, a spirit-guide helper, followed by shamanic service to the community.

---

[7] Oksana Zabuzhko, "Demifolohizatsiia istorii" *Slovo i chas* (No. 3, 1990) p. 37.

> Інакше кажучи, на початок XIX ст. — на час формування містецкої особистосі Шевченка—Україна являла класичний взірець «неісторичного народу». Місце історичної свідомості в такого народу неминуче заступає міфотворчість — як компенсація страху перед історією (М. Еліаде).

Thus for example the systematic reshaping of Ukrainian historical memory by Imperial Russian historiography resulted in the *kobzari* becoming the chief line of transmission of intergenerational information.

> Мені тринадцятий минало.
> Я пас ягнята за селом.
> Чи то так сонечко сіяло,
> Чи так мені чого було?
> Мені так любо, любо стало,
> Неначе в бога...
> Уже прокликали до паю,
> А я собі у бур'яні
> Молюся богу... І не знаю,
> Чого маленькому мені
> Тойді так приязно молилось,
> Чого так весело було.
> Господнє небо, і село,
> Ягня, здається, веселилось!
> (lines 1-14)

Line one fixes the time in terms of the boy's age[8] (youth, on the edge of transition to puberty), line two establishes place as outside the village, away from people but in the company of animals. Lines 3-6 describe the inner state: nominally inexplicable rapture, perhaps spontaneous (line 4) but more likely somehow effected by heaven (the sun) and "like being with God." He ignores offers of earthly nourishment (line 7) in favor of praying "in the weeds."[9] Characteristically, Shevchenko denies once again (beginning in line 9) any knowledge of his ecstasy's cause, which is a gently transparent device to better draw attention to it: "God's sky and the village" (line 13).

---

[8] This title is often translated incorrectly as something like "I Was Just Thirteen." But because Ukrainian age-reckoning is inclusive, the "тринадцятий" of the title refers to someone who is only twelve. A more accurate rendering would thus be "I Was Almost Thirteen."

Then comes the near-ubiquitous crisis which is so typical of the shaman's pre-initiation sickness:

> Та недовго сонце гріло,
> Недовго молилось...
> Запекло, почервоніло
> І рай запалило.
> Мов прокинувся, дивлюся:
> Село почорніло,
> Боже небо голубеє
> І те помарніло
>
> (lines 16-23)

The link between the state of beatitude (here rendered "prayer") and the benevolent sky is reaffirmed in lines 15-16 — and then ruptured. A major traumatizing cognitive shift, mainly visual at first, occurs: the village and "God's sky" turn black and faded. The perceptual fracture is tantamount to an awakening and new way of seeing (line 19). And the materialized vision goes well beyond color shifts, it is a reorganization of class-membership relations.

---

[9] The topos "в бур'яні" ("in/among the weeds") is a shamanic part of Shevchenko's self-perception code. Besides the obvious denotation of retreat into primal uninhabited space, there is the connotation of mandatory artistic seclusion. For details see the analysis of "А. О. Козачковському" below, especially lines 12-18, and the discussion on p. 97 and following.

> Поглянув я на ягнята —
> Не мої ягнята!
> Обернувся я на хати —
> Нема в мене хати!
> Не дав мені бог нічого!..
> І хлинули сльози,
> Тяжкі сльози!..
>
> (lines 23-29)

Specifically, the poet's self-perception is violently crystallized as categorical non-belonging. He comes to a sudden awareness of his separateness and essential estrangedness, not only from the ordinary, immediate world (the lambs he is tending, line 24) but also from anything he can turn to for safety and succor —his "хата," one of the handful of pivotal terms governing all of Shevchenko's poetry. As will be argued below, this "house/home" is the main symbol for the all-important state of communitas with which so much of the Ukrainian language oeuvre is concerned.

"I have no home!" ("*хата*," line 26) is elucidated in the following line as not having been given anything by God — an odd statement from a man all too cognizant of his uncommon artistic gifts. In fact the observation is ironic, for in not receiving a house with sheep to tend, i.e. the lot of ordinary men, he has also been apparently excluded from the edenic simplicity of such a life. "God gave me nothing!..." (line 27) is sardonic as well, because he *has* been endowed with extraordinary faculties—which have led only to tears (lines 28-29). "Сльози" here have two distinct meanings, the painful outcome of being profoundly isolated and alienated from the world in which he must live, and the act of shamanically creating poetic texts of a certain kind.

Once having entered into the shaman's hallucinatory psychic turbulence (and experiencing there the very rupture he will later be called upon to heal), the young Shevchenko encounters the expected spirit-guide in the form of a girl gathering flax by the side of the road:[10]

А дівчина
При самій дорозі
Недалеко коло мене
Плоскінь вибирала,
Та й почула, що я плачу.
Прийшла, привітала,
Утерала мої сльози
І поцілувала...

(line 29-36)

---

[10] Compare Livia Kohn, *Early Chinese Mysticism: Philosophy and Soteriology in the Taoist Tradition* (Princeton University Press, 1992) p. 81: "Shamans usually have spirit assistants, who appear in human form of the opposite sex, as animals, birds of prey, or powerful beasts. Shamans undergo initiation on two levels: a supernatural initiation in dreams and visions of the otherworld, in which they often experience the complete dissolution and reconstitution of themselves; and a human initiation through instruction in the lore and legends of the community, which enable them to find the unknown land beyond and identify their inhabitants properly." The first half of the initiation matches perfectly the events depicted in the present poem.

The guide's ministrations have an effect out of all proportion to their simplicity. She greets him, dries his tears, a kiss — and everything instantly reverses itself. The faded sun shines again, the alienation from the surrounding world is repaired (lines 37-38, and together with his familiar he herds the lambs ("someone else's lambs") to the water, which in the shamanic mode of writing is yet another reference to poetry's creation.

> Неначе сонце засіяло,
> Неначе все на світі стало
> Моє... лани гаї, сади!
> І ми, жартуючи, погнали
> Чужі ягнята до води.
>
> (lines 37-41)

The poem's concluding eight lines are a meditation on this event from the perspective of the poet's present.

> Бридня!.. А й досі, як згадаю,
> То серце плаче та болить,
> Чому господь не дав дожить
> Малого віку у тім раю.
> Умер би, орючи на ниві,
> Нічого б на світі не знав.
> Не був би в світі юродивим.
> Людей і бога не прокляв.
>
> (lines 42-49)

Significantly, the assessment is entirely negative. Although the episode resolves happily, Shevchenko sums it up as "unpleasant." Even the memory of it continues to bring him pain ("my heart weeps" again has the double meaning of poetic creation as well as grief). He rails at God for *not* permitting him to live out his life "in that paradise"—in spite of the fact that everything has been seemingly restored in lines 37-41. So it is not really restored; the poet was changed in some essential way by what transpired.

What essential way? Lines 46-48 are the key, as much to the poem as to Shevchenko's own understanding of himself, his life, and his art. "I would have died plowing the fields" refers to spiritual death, an extreme abridgement of perception and response, as much as to the literal fate of a typical serf. For in that eventuality he "would not have known anything" (line 47), which by the parallel structure of the following line suggests that it is precisely *knowing* that made him what he is: a holy fool, *jurodyvyj*, which in East Slavic culture is equivalent all but in name to being an actual shaman. Knowledge born of a single shattering experience clearly marks that event as the "cause" of his special status and indeed informs his entire life's course. Shevchenko is not only aware of what he is, but also knows when and how he came to be that way.

"Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo" appears to be a good start towards describing Shevchenko in terms of shamanic traits. It presents, in a well-known sequence, the steps commonly taken by apprentices and others who receive the call. More importantly, the piece is autobiographical. Rather than remarking on another writer or literary art in general, he is explicitly talking about his own vocation and life path. However, the significance of this short work extends much further. Besides providing a list of the expected motifs and images, it suggests which specific items in Shevchenko's mythopoetic code signal the presence of the shamanic mode. Because he comprehends the relationship between his "knowledge" (he realizes that it is a special type) and his art, his art and his status, his status and his role, Shevchenko might reasonably be expected to be conscious of moments when the alignments in question occur and to indicate them in some way. Conversely, the audience's ability to locate markers of this kind can signal opportunities to adjust reading conventions.

The elements comprising "Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo" can serve to begin reconstituting other poems in shamanic terms. In it, Shevchenko has described the circumstances that made him a poet, and also the kind of poet that he consequently is. It turns out that he often places material at the commencement of his poems (especially longer ones) which deals with the outer factors and internal states that acted on him at the time of the work's composition.[11] It therefore stands to reason that if a given poem's functionality was going to be primarily shamanic, evidence for this would be found precisely in its introductory section.

---

[11] In itself this is nothing unusual. Artists in all media often begin a work by commenting on their creative state. What is significant in Shevchenko's case is the specific invariants which recur and the properties of the poems in which they are found.

And so it often is. The opening thirty-two lines of "Kniazhna," for example—a typographic break indicates the start of the narrative proper—describe the poet's preparation for and entry into shamanic work. The invocation of the evening star is Shevchenko's summoning of natural forces (as spirit familiars), here made entirely explicit by line three's "Поговорим тихесенько" — Shevchenko's standard code phrase for shamanic communion.[12]

Зоре моя вечірняя,
Зійди над горою,
Поговорим тихесенько
В неволі з тобою.
Розкажи, як за горою
Сонечко сідає,
Як у Дніпра веселочка
Воду позичає.
Як широка сокорина
Віти розпустила...
А над самою водою
Верба похилилась;
Аж по воді розіслала
Зеленії віти,
А на вітах гойдаються
Нехрещені діти.
Як у полі на могилі
Вовкулак ночує,
А сич в лісі та на стрісі
Недолю віщує.
Як сон-трава при долині
Вночі розцвітає...

(lines 1-22)

---

[12] It is not just that they will speak "quietly," but that it will be wordless, silent, not partaking in normal human discourse.

Lines 5 through 22 petition ("Розкажи") the spirit guide for certain information. In order, the poet inquires after the sun (lines 5-6), water (lines 7-8), two kinds of trees (lines 9-14), followed by the portrayal of a trance world listing among its inhabitants the undead, werewolves, prophet-birds, and hallucinogenic plants—the usual shamanic stock-in-trade (lines 16-22). This is the world he visits, the one he gets certain kinds of knowledge from, the state he enters in order to convert that knowledge into verbal form. And it is a sphere in part defined by its categorical removal from people, at whose very mention the diction and imagery abruptly change:

А про людей... Та нехай їм.
Я їх, добрих, знаю.
Добре знаю. Зоре моя!
Мій друже єдиний.
І хто знає, що діється
В нас на Україні?
А я знаю. І розкажу
Тобі: й спати не ляжу.
А ти завтра тихесенько
Богові розкажеш.

(lines 23-32)

While the natural forces and familiars feed him their knowledge, Shevchenko for his part lays claim to a unique understanding of the human world. "Who knows," he asks, "what is going on?" and answers: "I know." (line 29) Further, he offers an exchange of information with the evening star and charges it with conveying this information to God. In so doing the poet displays incredible power: not only does he learn and nourish himself in the elemental world, he is able to pay it back in kind, to shape and direct it to some extent — a power not usually given even to shamans.

A similar sequence of images occurs in "N. N." ("Сонце заходить, чори чорніють"), which deals solely with the issue of shamanic composition.

Лину я, лину, думу гадаю,
І ніби серце одпочиває.
Чорніє поле, і гай, і гори,
На синє небо виходить зоря.
Ой зоре! зоре! — і сльози кануть.

(lines 6-10)

Line six refers to (shamanic) flight as something that occurs together with—is in some way equivalent to—poetic creation. The densely polysemous "думу гадаю" suggests once again that Shevchenko was uncommonly sensitive to the unusual nature of his art. "Дума" is of course simply a thought, especially a weighty one, but equally alludes to the quintessential Ukrainian national (though not folkloric) genre, through which key elements of historical memory were popularly transmitted. It is also the poet's chosen code-word for his writings in general (as in "Думи мої, думи мої"). And "гадати" merges the meanings of think, imagine, guess, and prophesy. Line 7 further associates the flying (state of artistic creativity) with a repose — a change of state of the heart. As in "Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo," a darkness grows, followed by the appearance of the familiar (again the evening star as in "Kniazhna"). Tears — the symbol for poetry — begin to fall in the very next line (10).

But then just before ending this brief mood piece, Shevchenko makes a seemingly romantic allusion to someone, perhaps a girl he has left behind (the stock phrase "очі карі" would suggest this), wondering if that person sees the star too.

> Чи ти зійшла вже і на Україні?
> Чи очі карі тебе шукають
> На небі синім? Чи забувають?
> Коли забули, бодай заснули,
> Про мою доленьку щоб і не чули.
> (lines 11-15)

But the alternative to seeing the star is "forgetting" it (line 13). Not forgetting *him* (the poet), rather forgetting or not bothering to look for the evening star. Thus Shevchenko deflects the expected folk song formula by conflating the star—in fact the spirit that guides him — with himself; forgetting one becomes equivalent to forgetting the other. Too, the penalty for such disregard seems anomalously harsh: "may you go to sleep," i.e. die, "so that you don't even hear of my fate."

Given the date of composition (1847) and the anonymously dedicatory "N. N." of the title, it is tempting to see the poem as nothing more than a note of mild reproach to, say, the Countess Repnina. But in fact it refers to personal matters only superficially. Equally present is a shamanic-compositional overlay, one which speaks to the very act of writing poetry.

Lines 1 and 2 with their commonplace visual and aural nature images signal an essential phase change: day turning into night corresponds to the poet's inner transition from a relatively temporal state to one of readiness for specialized and unusual work.

> Сонце заходить, гори чорніють,
> Пташечка тихне, поле німіє,
> Радіють люде, що одпочинуть,
> А я дивлюся... і серцем лину
> 5 В темний садочок на Україну.
> (lines 1-5)

The contrasts between heaven and earth (сонце/гори), day and night, sound and silence in these two lines are continued in the divergence of "people" (люди, a key shamanic marker), and the "я" that follows. *They* are permitted to rest and to derive simple happiness from doing so; *my* lot, determined by looking/observing (line 4), lies with something else: the "little garden" in Ukraine which, along with "хата," is one of Shevchenko's chief expressions for the altered state (communitas) he seeks to restore and must access in his quest for that restoration.[13]

---

[13] The classic of the use of this term to indicate communitas is in the [10th] section of "V Kazemati," normally referred to as "Sadok vyshnevyj kolo khaty."

> 260 Садок вишневий коло хати,
> Хрущі над вишнями гудуть.

A comparison of this poem with Vasilij Zhukovsky's "Ночь" may help clarify these points. Shevchenko could hardly have been unfamiliar with the famous elegy written nearly a quarter century earlier and outwardly appearing so similar to his own "Sonce zaxodyt'..."

Уже утомившийся день
Склонился в багряные воды,
Темнеют лазурные своды,
Прохладная стелется тень;
И ночь молчаливая мирно
Пошла по дороге эфирной,
И Геспер летит перед ней
С прекрасной звездою своей.

Сойди, о небесная, к нам
С волшебным твоим покрывалом,
С целебным забвенья фиалом,
Дай мира усталым сердцам.
Своим миротворным явленьем,
Своим усипительним пеньем
Томимую душу тоской,

Плугатарі з плугами йдуть,
Співають, ідучи, дівчата,
А матері вечерять ждуть.

Сем'я вечеря коло хати,
Вечірня зіронька встає.

(lines 260 -266)

The end of the day, people getting ready to rest, the evening star all present in these seven lines coalesce into the single word "садочок" in "Sonce zaxodyt'..." and thus determine it as a pointer to communitas. Grabowicz discusses the above fragment as "[a] very similar case" to the opening section of "Kniazhna," which poem he explicates as being "not an example or illustration, but an encapsulation of the essential meaning; in terms of Shevchenko's poetic code it is a *standardized* symbol, and hence an icon of the meaning he seeks to convey." (*PAM*p. 54, emphasis in the original)

Как матерь дитя, успокой.

As in the Shevchenko piece, we find a description of approaching dusk, respite from weariness, and the all-important supplication to the evening star. Both poems open with acronical images, speak of a tired heart finding peace, introduce the "rising star" exactly half way through, and are of nearly identical length. But these similarities at the level of surface structure nevertheless proceed from different aesthetic systems and, more generally, diverse compositional principles. Zhukovsky is academic, almost pedantic in his formality: two bilaterally symmetric octaves with exactly mirrored 13-17-17-13 word counts, classical amphibracic tetrameter throughout with alternating masculine and feminine rhymes, a one-noun-one-adjective scheme, grammatical rhymes, a stark paucity of tropes. By contrast, Shevchenko makes no particular bid at a consistent rhyme scheme, does not "section" the poem, and outside of a consistent meter, seems little concerned with the verse's structure at all. Where Zhukovsky reaches for an elevated tone through use of "high-register" words/epithets (e.g. лазурные своды, "cerulean vault") and Classical allusions, Shevchenko permits himself diminutives and generally partakes of a folk-level vocabulary (бодай, лину). Zhukovsky constructs a formal elegy, thematically a contemplation of and emotional response to the end (i.e. death) of the day as a discrete event; Shevchenko focuses instead on the *consequences* of the transition from day to night, from the quotidian condition to a transcendental phase.

The key difference between these two outwardly comparable works lies in how each relates to its central entity — the authorially summoned Evening Star. Both poets generally treat the star as a kind of Muse, but the resemblance ends there. For the Russian writer the star is the object of *supplication*. Stanza two amounts to a frank prayer containing a list of related requests: the author asks for obliviousness, peace, sleep, and calm for the heart and soul on the collective behalf (the final line is an unmistakably Christian image). In the Ukrainian poem the star is the object of *interrogation*, at whom pointed queries are directed and through whom conditions are dictated. Where Shevchenko commands his guiding star, Zhukovsky submits to her. In "Ночь" the author does not appear; in "N. N." Shevchenko is not only a dominant presence, he positions himself (or more exactly his "fate") at the end of the poem as being more significant than anyone else.

Yet no concrete reason for this eminence is given. A clue may be found in the poem's opening lines, which are usually not regarded as anything more than a standard nature-scene preliminary, a point of departure exploring the interior world of one's feelings, exactly as in the Zhukovsky poem. But "Сонце заходить..." was written in exile, in the middle of a desert. There are no mountains, no bird songs, no literally visible peasants returning from their work in the fields. Shevchenko is *creating* this scene, immersing himself in the practice of shamanic "seeing" (explicitly mentioned in line 4), and then using it as point of departure for his trance-flight ("серцем лину") to Ukraine's "little garden." It is this trance-journey that also creates the Evening Star[14] (line 9), which is why he has to ask it if it has "also" risen in Ukraine: it is not the same star, not the same state of being. Shevchenko can conceive his own guide; others ("очі карі," a standard synecdoche for Ukrainians in general, as well as another allusion to sight) have to look for it. If they fail to, if they forget the mythic component of their lives, then they will be spiritually dead and therefore unable to share in the poet's "fate," his ability to see.

This detailed look at how markers of the shamanic creative mode may be found in a poem's incipit has focused mainly on a single topos, that of the Evening Star. Mention has been made of the presence of some of the other more obvious elements from the shamanic repertoire, such as spirit-guides in the form of birds or other animals. But the purpose of adducing these instances goes well beyond pointing out that Shevchenko speaks of things associated with shamans; it can also be seen that *when* (and eventually it will be argued *because*) he does so, the text which subsequently emerges is of a particular type: it either discusses the restructuring of collective memory and self-perception, or actually *does* so through repeated rhetorical shifts. Compiling cases where text is generated in this manner reveals the details of the shamanic modality.

---

[14] Zhukovsky introduces the Evening Star formally, through the vehicle of Greek mythology. "Геспер" may refer to Hespera, one of the names for Eos, who crosses the sky (as Hemera) in Helios's chariot and brings evening on arrival on the western shore of Ocean. Another possibility is Hespere and her sisters Aegle and Erytheis, the Daughters of the Night, whose names refer to the three colors of the sunset.

A typical instance of such a marker may be seen in the already-discussed initiatory poem "N. N." ("Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo..."). Here, the marker functions as an indicator of *state*: the poet's, the character's, or the "state" — that is to say type — of the text being generated. The example here is the "weed"-word, *бур'ян*, which is collective ("weeds") in the singular and locational ("a place where there are weeds") in the plural, *бур'яни*. Either way the reference is to unpeopled space, literal seclusion away from others or a condition of being temperamentally removed from the thinking patterns and attitudes of the "ordinary" people, the "люде" who appear so regularly in Shevchenko's poetry.[15] What the function of this particular marker entails may be gleaned from the various instances of its use.

There are 19 occurrences of the "бур'ян"-word in the poetic corpus. Five appear as nominative/accusative singular forms, and as such don't seem to participate nearly as distinctly in this particular meaning-subsystem.[16] Of the remaining 14, however, twelve have to do with location: they all take the form of locative singular cases with *в/у* or instrumental plurals governed by the preposition *між;* the remaining two are instrumental singulars and therefore do not indicate location, but nonetheless contribute to the delineation of this marker in ways similar to the other instances. Thus "weeds" for Shevchenko directly represent places shunned or neglected by people, and somewhat more obliquely signals cognitive spaces which are for the most part similarly unfrequented. The "weed" topos also consistently presents related circumstances for entering such spaces, of which a detailed discussion follows.

---

[15] The extended associations around the word "бур'ян/бур'яни" in Ukrainian culture go beyond the idea of simple isolation or a desolate area. Because the areas immediately around dwellings were kept clear of weeds, "бур'ян" indicates distance from the "хата" — itself a metonym for collective society, one used by Shevchenko in a highly specialized way. Thus "бур'ян" represents distancing from (common) humanity and hence from human concerns. Given also that in Ukraine in Shevchenko's time weeded-over areas were used in the absence of outhouse facilities as well as for sex, the implication of weeds becomes "activity one does not engage in around other people," i.e., *privacy*. Additionally, areas designated as "бур'яни" had connotative links with the condition of communitas: they were no one's property, were not seen as having any value, and represented the primordial, undeveloped state of the land. Besides this they suggest the neglected and the abandoned, but also something that can function as a place of shelter.

[16] These five instances are found in the following four poems and line numbers: "Сова" (243); "А. О. Козачковському" (69); "У бога за дверми лежала сокира..." (42); and "Марія" (505 and 565). Rather than being neutral examples of flora in descriptions of natural settings, the references to weeds here have their own typology which is not strictly separate from that detailed below. For the moment the only point being made with respect to this issue is how clearly we can discern marker functionally through surface features such as grammatical number and case.

Although the three cases of the "weed"-word in the instrumental plural ("між бур'янами"—Shevchenko actually writes "меж" instead of "між" twice and "поміж" once) are too small a sample to provide convincing evidence just by themselves, together with the nine locative singular examples they contribute to a unified pattern. Two of the instances are from the same poem, "Lichu v nevoli dni i nochi..."[17] and participate in two separate passages which are constructed much alike.

> Каламутними болотами,
> Меж бур'янами, за годами
> Три года сумно протекли.
> Багато дечого взяли
> З моєї темної комори

---

[17] The 1858 version. Lines 1-12, set off from the rest of the text, are the same as in the 1850 version, but the remainder is quite different from and much shorter than in the earlier work. Both speak about time passing in the context of the poet's creative process.

І в море нишком однесли.
І нишком проковтнуло море
Моє не злато-серебро —
Мої літа, моє добро,
Мою нудьгу, мої печалі,
Тії незримії скрижалі,
Незримим писані пером.

(Lines 13 - 24)

As in "Sonce zaxodyt'...," it must be noted that there were no literal swamps or weeds (lines 13 and 14) in the desert where this poem was composed. It is another example of creation through shamanic "seeing," in this case focusing on the act of making poetry itself. As described towards the end of this chapter, flowing-water imagery connotes both the creation of verse and the instruction or knowledge contained within it. In the present example, it is *time* that flows, but the identification of the passing years with water/poetry remains overt, since the flow goes "to the sea" and carries with it most if not all of the poet's creative resources. "In the weeds" (line 14) thus refers to the altered state in which poetry is written, and "murky swamps" (line 13, water in stasis) implies its torpid articulation given the circumstances of exile. More than a melancholy comment on the inclement conditions of his exile, this passage develops a frank affirmation of Shevchenko's special status: he speaks of his "dark storehouse" which holds goods more valuable than mere gold or silver, and which culminate in nothing less than a legacy comparable to that of the Law handed down by Moses. In these two lines, 23 and 24, the unmistakable reference to the tablets ("скрижалі") received on Mount Sinai plainly shows Shevchenko's perception of himself not as just a storyteller, bard, or another Kulturträger. He is not only empowered to instruct and counsel, even legislate, at the same level as major prophets, he proceeds to do so — at least in this case — solely on the basis of his *own* repository (one of the meanings of комора is "granary," hence a source of nourishment) of knowledge derived from the specific types of experience listed in lines 21 and 22. In this Shevchenko announces a power even greater than Moses's, who had to take his authority from a Higher Being. Moreover, *these* tablets are as invisible as the pen that writes them; their directives explicitly partake of the textual — line 24 specifies writing with a pen — and also explicitly non-textual in that they cannot be read. His testament arises "in the weeds," flows into the sea, is contingent upon suffering/sadness (line 22), but is not essentially verbal.[18]

---

[18] The single adjective "незримий" unfolds into a range of overlapping possibilities. It is literally "not seen," which could mean invisible, or visible but unnoticed, or seen (i.e., read) but not understood, or unreadable for a variety of reasons: unknown language, illiterate or indifferent audience, and so on. All apply. Shared among these possible variants is Shevchenko's momentary de-privileging of text(uality) in favor of focusing on the inner particulars of securing and encoding his message. The "unseeable" aspect of *this* distinct creative mode along with Shevchenko's comments on how it arises marks it as shamanic.

In the nine lines (the poem's final ones) immediately following this passage, Shevchenko expands a little on the typical components of this mode and how its shamanic genesis engenders poetic activity.

> Нехай гнилими болотами
> Течуть собі меж бур'янами
> Літа невольничі. А я!
> Такая заповідь моя!
> Посижу трошки, погуляю,
> На степ, на море подивлюсь,
> Згадаю дещо, заспіваю,
> Та й знов мережать захожусь
> Дрібненько книжечку. Рушаю.
> (lines 25-33)

The first three lines here, 25-27, appear to mimic lines 13-15 above. But whereas the earlier section was followed by a rueful account of his problems around the entire poetic enterprise, this second instance of very similar wording signals acceptance ("нехай," line 25) and sets forth the details of what is actually happening. After reiterating the swamps-weeds-time flowing sequence, Shevchenko identifies the whole matter as his personal vocation. Line 28's "заповідь" reinforces line 23's "скрижалі" and positions himself, at least potentially, as a giver of commandments. He then lists exactly what goes into the process: solitary time spent sitting or walking (line 29), more shamanic "seeing" perhaps as a consequence of this (line 30), the journey through mythic time and its resulting artistic creation ("згадаю/заспіваю," line 31), and the fruition of this course of events, the "lacework" that is the physical making of a book.[19]

What caps the association between the "in the weeds" state and the "embroidering" that is specialized (shamanic) creativity is the following lines from "A. O. Kozachkovs'komu." Shevchenko has been speaking about how as a child he would fashion "little books" out of sheets of paper (the "маленьку книжечку" in this poem resonates closes with the "дрібненько книжечку" of line 33 in the last quote above), after which

> Та сам собі у бур'яні,
> Щоб не почув хто, не побачив,
> Виспівую та плачу.
> І довелося знов мені
> На старість з віршами ховатись,
> Мережать книжечки, співати
> І плакати у бур'яні.
> (lines 12-18)

Besides confirming the link between the weeds topos and a select subset of artistic activity, this passage offers further evidence for a shamanic nature of this particular writing mode: line 13 is taken straight from "Perebendia," which will be examined in chapter six.

---

[19] It is interesting that the final outcome of all this should be precisely a book, rather than individual poems, perhaps cycles of songs, or simply occasional poetry — all that Shevchenko could realistically expect under the circumstances. No such unity of endeavor is ever mentioned with regard to the graphic art which he was also working on at the time, for example. The writer clearly views his work as a single, ongoing project to which he returns repeatedly (line 32). Even the idea of a unified, named book of poetry by one author was still fairly new in Slavic literature at the time, the first such one by a major poet being Baratynsky's *Сумерки* in 1842. (Before that an anthology might have been simply called something like "Стихотворения.") Given this poem's oblique reference to the Commandments of Moses, the "little book" of line 34 might in fact be a pointer to a somewhat larger Book.

Further substantiations of the weed-marker's function may be found among the other instances of its use, especially with the preposition-plus-locative construction. In the epic poem "Maria," for example, the solitary meditative habits of the child Jesus are described as Him spending time alone in the weeds and engaging in creative activities there:

> Ані пограється з дітьми,
> Ані побігає; самий,
> 600 Один-однісінький, бувало,
> Сидить собі у бур'яні
> Та клепку теше.
>
> (Lines 598-602)

At the end of this poem Shevchenko places the Virgin's death "in the weeds" and links it with another marker of shamanic creativity-state, the wattle fence ("тин") around a peasant's house.

> Любов і правду рознесли
> По всьому світу. Ти ж під тином,
> 745 Сумуючи, у бур'яні
> Умерла з голоду. Амінь.
>
> (Lines 743-746)[20]

A similar association between weeds and a rejected woman's death appears in "The Witch," and "The Owl" concludes with a similarly outcast female ending her days in the weeds under people's fences.

---

[20] In the edition of Shevchenko's works used throughout this monograph, these are the poem's final lines. Many other editions, however, append an additional eleven lines concerning posthumous abuse visited upon the Virgin Mary.

> Я вже ніколи не просплюсь.
> Отак де-небудь і загину
> У бур'яні...
> ("The Witch" lines 146-148)

> 240 Люди лаяли... Бо, бачте,
> Спать їм не давала
> Та кропиву під їх тином
> І бур'ян топтала.
> ("The Owl" lines 240-243)

It is clear that marginality, especially the socially defined periphery of the normal human condition, partakes of exalted and transcendent states as much as it does of aberrance, banishment, and death. The fence, the estrangement from "people" (as in line 240 above), the isolation of repeatedly spending time "in the weeds" all symbolize the opposition of the poet-shaman and the community (громада), both as a source of artistic empowerment and as a possible condition of dementia and disease. Fences demarcate human i.e., communal space from the weeds that are the province of holy fools and visionaries, both keeping them out as undesirables and permitting them the solitude their work requires. The seer's job is to bring the benefits of being at the interface ("by the fence") into the community (house, хата) without dying first. No better example of this need be sought than in the lines following the prefatory section of "Son (Komedia)":

Отак, ідучи попідтинню
З бенкету п'яний уночі,
Я міркував собі йдучи,
Поки доплентавсь до хатини.
(Lines 49-52)

This poem ("Son") exemplifies the shamanic mode in Shevchenko's poetry particularly well, and pointedly elucidates several of its details. A more complete analysis begins on page 190 of chapter six.

In the instrumental singular, the weed-topos links up with swamps just as meaningfully as it did in "Lichu v nevoli...," combining these images with that of a Ukraine "in ruins." Most significantly, the ruined state of the country seems to occasion both the holy fool (юродивий) status of the poet and the words (tears, сльози) that are supposed to wake up Ukraine ("заснула Вкраїна") from her "weed covered" and "swamp rotted" condition. This function is explicitly shamanic: restoring a previously healthy communal state through word-weaving as rhetorical intervention.

А я, юродивий, на твоїх руїнах
Марно сльози трачу: заснула Вкраїна,
Бур'яном укрилась, цвіллю зацвіла,
В калюжі, в болоті серце прогноїла

("Chyhyryne, Chyhyryne..." lines 26-29)

No less notable in this respect are the lines in "I vyris ia na chuzhyni..."; the white-washed "houses" fallen into disrepair echo the "ruins" in "Chyhyryne..." above, as the "ponds overgrown with weeds" do the swamp and decay images. All of it proposes the loss of a definite constitution (perhaps sanity, line 30) among the people. Line 29 pronounces Shevchenko's ability to see this loss to be decidedly shamanic, because it is just line 20 from "N. N." ("Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo...") with the modal adverb "неначе" added to indicate interior vision — as it does in the following line (30) as well.

25 Блукають люди, повсихали
Сади зелені, погнили
Біленькі хати, повалялись,
Стави бур'яном поросли.
Село неначе погоріло,
30 Неначе люде подуріли,
(Lines 25 - 30)

Two lines later the shamanic mode is again affirmed through reference to the whole vision having been the outcome of a *journey*,[21] from which the poet promptly returns at this point after an appropriate creative outpouring — again, as elsewhere, of "tears" (line 34).

I я, заплакавши, назад

---

[21] Early in the poem Shevchenko mentions the start of his voyage:

...В лиху годину,
Якось недавно довелось
10 Мені заїхать в Україну,
(Lines 8-10)

These lines and 33-34 frame the shamanic-journey portion of the text.

Поїхав знову на чужину.
(Lines 34-35)

His return is "to a foreign land," the inner state *he* inhabits when not himself making the trance-journeys that give birth to the shamanic mode poems.

Structurally this poem is also shamanic in that the progression of its images recapitulates some of the main sections of the initiatory "Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo..." work. At the outset we again find Shevchenko in solitary contemplation of the "seeming" perfection around him—the same word, "здається," as in line 20 of "N. N." is used, and there is a mention of God as well.

То одинокому мені
Здається — кращого немає
Нічого в бога, як Дніпро
Та наша славная країна...
(Lines 3-6)

This is followed by the shamanic journey as mentioned above, which renders a dream-like vision of the suddenly devastated and depopulated village. Instead of being aided by a spirit familiar as he was on that first occasion (the girl by the side of the road in the earlier poem), Shevchenko simply terminates the experience as he now knows how to do. The dozen lines after line 34 are therefore in a much more literal, even journalistic mode. None of the standard shamanic image-indicators appear, instead it is a direct reportage on conditions of serfdom in Ukraine. Then after a typographic break following line 46 he shifts back into considerations of modes of seeing.

> А як не бачиш того лиха,
> То скрізь здається любо, тихо,
> І на Україні добро.
>
> (Lines 49-51)

Accordingly, the language becomes again full of now-familiar tropes at this point, and the image of the village-as-communitas is reinstated.

But the barrier to (re)creating this condition, the poet suggests in the concluding three lines, is the presence of the feudal order in Ukraine. More exactly, it is the *passing* of this order ("if no trace remained..." lines 61-62), and specifically on Ukrainian territory, that would make the difference. In this way, Shevchenko focuses attention on the *transitions* between sets of social conditions as much as on the conditions themselves. Here are the poem's final seven lines:

> А понад ним зеленіють
> Широкії села,
> А у селах у веселих
> І люде веселі.
> Воно б, може, так і сталось,
> Якби не осталось
> Сліду панського в Украйні.
>
> (Lines 56-62)

When he does provide the particulars of his country's predicament (lines 36 - 43), he does so precisely in the terms of communitas' antipode, structure: the essence of the problem is that people have been enslaved and objectified. As noted, this passage is delivered "straight," with few details and no nature tropes.

> І не в однім отім селі,
> А скрізь на славній Україні
> Людей у ярма запрягли
> Пани лукаві... Гинуть! Гинуть!
> У ярмах лицарські сини,
> А препогані́ї пани
> Жидам, братам своїм хорошим,
> Остатні продають штани...
>
> (Lines 36-43)

In making the transitions between this (real) world and the idealized one of communitas, Shevchenko engages in shamanic activity which can be mapped textually. His return from the scene of oppression and exploitation parallels the exit from the trauma of initiation in "N. N.," including a correlative to the word "water" in line 41 of that poem.

> Меж горами старий Дніпро,
> Неначе в молоці дитина,
> Красується, любується
> На всю Україну.
>
> (Lines 52-55)

The lengthy treatment just accorded to the word "weeds" is indispensable for identifying the main vocabulary around which Shevchenko constructs instances of his literary shamanism. As is becoming apparent, however, "бур'ян" operates within a larger system of such locutions to initialize the shamanic mode. In order to secure the tools for a shamanically-mediated reading of these texts, additional marker-words need to be certified. Some of these markers may seem only peripheral to the shamanic nature of the discourse; others inhere in and partially constitute it. Items like the above-mentioned "fence"-word (тин), for example, appear more as instances of Shevchenko's general myth(opoet)ic code[22] than as principal indices of shamanic mechanics at work.[23]

Chief among the shamanic mode-markers are locutions built around such semantic fields as хата ("house, hut"), чужина ("foreign place," especially in the combination чужі люди, "foreign people"), доля ("fate"), water images (especially rivers [including references to weeping as a code for a distinct category of poetic writing), могила ("burial mound"), and a handful of others. Each of these needs to be at least briefly considered and exemplified in order to make sense of the shamanically informed poems—even if only at the level of the lexicon of markers.

Substantives based on the root *чуж-* (which encompasses the meanings alien, foreign, pertaining or belonging to someone else) occur 153 times in Shevchenko's poetry, roughly twice per every thousand words he wrote.[24] Of these, some thirty instances or twenty percent collocate within one line with the word "people," almost always as the combination "чужі люди/е" and often including also a phrase meaning "foreign land" — typically but not always "чужина."[25] In most cases the literal interpretations of these words produce viable readings; indeed, understanding the text at this level contributes to the common conceptualizations of Shevchenko as a "nationalist" writer or at least a politically engaged one.

---

[22] Shevchenko actually has more than one operative code (put another way, the code is polysemous), so the specifics of Shevchenko's mythopoesis as set forth by George Grabowicz in *PAM* may not always coincide with my elucidations. This does not necessarily indicate conflicting interpretations, but rather a complementary adduction of some symbols' aspects.

[23] The line is not always sharp. Although the "fence"-word mainly belongs to the class of terms that help shape the various descriptions of communitas in the poetry, communitas itself as a poetic topos is pivotal for delineating the shamanic moment.

Looking more closely, however, it is possible to discern another layer of signification: "foreign people/land" turns out to be one of Shevchenko's more common markers for alluding to one of the two interior conditions between which he moves in the production of his shamanically-informed verse.

---

[24] In case an absolute frequency of almost one-fifth of one percent does not seem particularly significant, consider how counterintuitive this is from the traditional or populist perspective on Shevchenko. If asked which is likely more numerous in the *Kobzar*, words based on "чужий" or words formed from "Дніпро," most people familiar with Shevchenko's oeuvre would readily say the latter. In fact the river's name comes up exactly 87 times in all its permutations. An even more striking example is the "cossack"-word, which even including its diminutives and hyphenated forms occurs only 143 times. Thus at a count of 153, the "чужий"-series commands a telling if perhaps unobvious preeminence.

[25] For lexical data of this type see Oleh S. Ilnytzkyj and George Hawrysch, *A Concordance to the Poetic Works of Taras Shevchenko* (University of Toronto Press, 1997).

Specifically, the word "чужина" and its cognates refer to states which are somehow wrong: out of harmony, lacking a correctness of outlook and action. At first an apparently geographical designation, it points in fact to a psychic displacement, a loss of spiritual balance or receptive order—all the while retaining the option to denote non-Ukrainians. The opening two lines of the poem just discussed, "I vyris ia na chuzhyni..." illustrate the general idea.

> І виріс я на чужині,
> І сивію в чужому краї:

In point of fact, Shevchenko did *not* "grow up in a foreign land" as stated in the first line; quite the contrary, he was born and spent the first nearly twenty years of his life in his beloved Ukraine. So in this case the reference is to his profound sense of alienation, undiminished since childhood, from those around him and from his fellow Ukrainians in particular.[26] His entire life is spanned in the above couplet: the first line summarizes metaphorically the overarching psychic awareness which permeated his youth, and the second encapsulates the central fact of his immediate circumstances—circumstances which at least indirectly resulted from that earlier awareness. Between them, these two lines effectively generate the poem in that the transitions described in it occur precisely between the two kinds of alienation they connote. (The apparent inconsistency of referring to his own country as "foreign" can be perfectly paralleled by an alternate reading of the famous lines from Shevchenko's "Testament" which speak about how "enemy blood" will be required to return a lost state of beatitude both to the poet and to his country(men).

---

[26] "Foreign land" in this usage may also refer to a Ukraine thoroughly subject to the occupying (Russian) power.

Як понесе з України
У синєє море
Кров ворожу... отойді я
І лани і гори —
Все покину, і полину
До самого бога
Молитися... а до того
Я не знаю бога.
Поховайте та вставайте,
Кайдани порвіте
І вражою злою кров'ю
Волю окропіте.

Normally these two instances of the "foe"-word are understood to mean the expulsion of Ukraine's foreign occupiers by force of arms, but they may equally allude to the internecine "bad blood" that causes Ukrainians to function as their own worst enemies — as for example through chronically unresolved internal conflicts.[27] Such a reading may represent a refinement over the more literal interpretation.)

Shevchenko's relentless cognizance of his personal separateness — spiritual, political, perceptual — rests at the root of his artistic persona in its shamanic manifestation. This is no mere "otherness," no cultural disenfranchisement of the hypersensitive aesthete. Far beyond being an instance of psychological fragility or social maladjustment, the poet's essential spiritual estrangement and resultant internal solitude come from a unique perceptual configuration coexisting with the disposition to present that gestalt as a personally-mediated reconfiguring of the world.

---

[27] I am indebted to George Grabowicz for this idea (personal communication, May 1990).

Much of the affective power of Shevchenko's writings needs to be understood in these terms. The fundamental rift that so much of the poetry strives to mitigate carries at least double force, since Shevchenko is twice removed from having a normal chance at social integration and hence personal collectedness: once occasioned by the chronically unsettled dichotomy of his Ukrainian-serf origins and his later Russian-celebrity persona, and again due to an inherent alienation from each of them in turn. Further, these two sources of distancing are bound together in the fact that Shevchenko sees the social and spiritual incursions into his country's "identity" as being projected onto his own psyche. George Grabowicz's postulating of adjusted and non-adjusted "personalities" in the poet's creativity (*PAM* p. 8 and passim) captures a part of this dynamic,[28] but beyond the specific output associated with each of these two expressive modes lie the texts generated by the interplay, the inevitable collisions between unbalanced self and ineffectual collective on one hand, and a foreign, emotionally unsupportive, politically hostile social order on the other. Polarities of this magnitude bring pain and exhaustion to both the individuals and societies they afflict. Resolution is often sought, as it is in this case, through manipulation of the narratives that account for, describe, or otherwise comment on these polarities.

Hence Shevchenko's preoccupation with the *чужий*-locus in his poetry, a focus which stems from a need to understand and from there to release the tensions built into a culture's transition-caused instability and the reflexes thereof in the poet's own mental makeup. The basic schema is fairly straightforward: чужина and related word-forms refer to material or spiritual conditions and artifacts identified by the writer as unhealthy, dangerous, unproductive, injurious, or otherwise undesirable, as much to his polity as to himself personally. These qualities associate tightly with structure, both as a "non-Ukrainian" import and as a specific socio-emotional pathology manifesting in some Ukrainians; they oppose communitas and the integrated state Ukrainians are posited to have had in the past.

---

[28] Grabowicz's formulation is accurate and useful, but restricts itself to examining each mode separately. (On page 9 the writer mentions that "[t]here is considerable interplay or "leakage" between the two modes by way common themes, experiences, and values," but does not develop or illustrate this idea.) Yet so much of the poetry clearly proceeds from an attempt to close the distance between the two states.

It would be natural to expect the word(s) signaling the binary pairing of the "чужина" series to relate to "своє," and to some degree this is so. However, at least equally prominent in this capacity are the words formed from "хата." For Shevchenko, *хата* or *хатина* serve as pointers to the cognitive "spaces" or states a person inhabits. Without a modifier or in the combination "своя хат(ин)а" these coextend with the state of communitas; otherwise the allusion is to structure, the generally undesirable sources of identity.[29] Indeed, the very presence of a modifier for "хата" other than "своя" signals a problem with respect to the maintenance of communitas.

A common epithet for lost communitas (or similar degraded internal configurations which had previously been healthy and balanced) is precisely "чужа хата," a phrase that binds closely with images of aging and death, as in these two excepts from "Najmychka":

---

[29] In the famous political poem "Son (Komedia)" Shevchenko presents a thoroughly shamanic vision of St. Petersburg. Part of the description of its architecture reads:

> Церкви, та палати,
> Та пани пузаті,
> І ні однісінької хати.

That "хати" in line 276 refers to communitas, whose complete absence is underscored by the encroachment of edifices serving hierarchical interests (government, commerce, the church).

> Тяжко, Катре, умирати
> В чужій теплій хаті!
>
> ....
>
> Прости мене! Я каралась
> Весь вік в чужій хаті...
> (Lines 455-456 and 543-544)

The opposition between *хата* and *чуже* can be documented at length in the interests of certifying the poetry's shamanic mode. However, the relationship between these two topoi is not limited to simple antithesis. Two additional lexical markers closely adhere to this pair: *поле* and *доля*. Together, these four words indicate the perimeters of the "force field" that subtends so much of Shevchenko's shamanic poetics.

Words formed from "поле" occur in the texts with almost exactly the same frequency as the "чуж-" series: 154 times. Exactly one-seventh of these (22 instances) collocate within two lines[30] with the word "доля." (It may be tempting to explain this as a consequence of rhyme, but in fact at most three of the collocations can be accounted for this way.) "Поле" also has the exact same one-in-seven degree of collocation with "чуже" as "доля" does with it. Typically, the combination here is "чуже поле" in the locative: Shevchenko uses the phrase "в/на чужім/чужому полі" 19 times but does *not* bring the two words together in any other cases.[31] Moreover, virtually all of these moments refer to death:

---

[30] Collocation within two lines means an instance in Shevchenko's text where a form of the word "доля" occurs no further away than the second line following or the second line preceding the line in which a form of "поле" was found. This is an arbitrary limit set by the particular search method employed (specifically it is the one used by Ilnytzkyj and Hawrysch, *A Concordance*...). As such it indicates only the lower limit of an imagic affinity between a pair of words, because a semantic linkage may exist at a

> Орел вийняв карі очі
> На чужому полі,
> Біле тіло вовки з'їли —
> Така його доля.
>
> (Lines 37-40)

> Тогді неси мою душу
> Туди, де мій милий,
> Червоною калиною
> Постав на могилі.
> Буде легше в чужім полі
> Сироті лежати,
>
> (Lines 29-34)

---

remove of more than two lines. Thus the collocations quoted here are quite likely to be underestimations of the full extent of the actual symbolic linkages among various topoi.

[31] A lone accusative constitutes an exception, but it appears solely due to the presence of a verb of motion:

> І прожене долю
> З цієї хати веселої
> На чужеє поле.

Note that these three lines from "Невольник" contain all four of the key lexical markers under discussion in a cluster of just ten words.

Пішов козак, сумуючи,
Нікого не кинув,
Шукав долі в чужім полі
Та там і загинув.
(Lines 34-36)

А хто мене поховає?
На чужому полі
Хто заплаче надо мною?
Доле моя, доле!
(Lines 2394-2397)

Умер неборака.
Нудьга його задавила
На чужому полі,
В чужу землю положила:
Така його доля!
(Lines 2506-2510)[32]

Such close and consistent correlation of theme and (not particularly expected) lexical markers suggests that the "death" referred to here is not (necessarily) physical. In these examples and in several others not reproduced here, it appears that the mere fact of the person's *presence* in the "foreign field" *brings about* their "death." Just that circumstance alone, simply being in foreign territory is equivalent to (i.e. the cause of) a state of death. And if the territory is cognitive, then the death is spiritual. These are descriptions of people, invariably Ukrainians, who have strayed from their own "хата" and their own field, and have thereby lost some essential integral conditions —perhaps those of communitas.

---

[32] The first three excerpts are from "Причинна," "Думка (Вітре буйний, вітре буйний...)," and "Думка (Тяжко-важко в світі жити...)" respectively; the final two are from "Гайдамаки." Note that *доля* is referenced in 4 of the 5 quotes. The remaining examples with "на чужому полі" are quite similar to the ones given here.

Pursuing this idea further, we can see references to this very problem when Shevchenko speaks about "чужа хата" as opposed to "своя хата." The lines from "Najmychka" quoted above mention death explicitly,[33] but in other poems the relationship between "foreign" situation and being in a moribund spiritual state emerges from abandoning the "хата"-identified state.

І чужому научайтесь,
Й свого не цурайтесь.
Бо хто матір забуває,
Того бог карає,
Того діти цураються,
В хату не пускають.
Чужі люди проганяють,
І немає злому
На всій землі безконечній
Веселого дому.
(Lines 220-229)

These very famous lines from "Посланіє" ("The Epistle") are almost always quoted to convey a call to patriotism, to "sticking with what is one's own," and regularly find considerable resonance among Ukrainians through reinforcing precisely this thought. But this very appeal might better be understood in terms of the texts' shamanic structure.[34] Surely Shevchenko was not attempting to explain that the consequences of distancing oneself from "one's own" — read Ukrainian-ness — (line 221) would be familial and social, that that person's "children will shun them, and bar them from their house" (lines 224-225). Much more likely the poet is explicating the psychological dynamic (here, trauma) involved in losing the primal wholeness born of original identity. The "свого не цурайтесь" of line 221 resolves into "forgetting one's mother" — one's origins and their attendant cognitive modes — in the line following. "God's punishment" (line 223) thus ensues, the agency of which turns out to be one's "children."[35] But Shevchenko often uses the word "діти" to mean the products of his thinking, both artifacts and attitudes. Even without such obvious and well-known examples as "Думи мої, думи мої..." we can still find powerful confirmations of this relationship, as in the opening five lines of "Невольник."

---

[33] Another example from "Hajdamaky" speaks of death as *necessitating* a relocation into alien terrain, as well as possibly being a consequence of that relocation.

Стояв довго. "Спочинь, батьку,
На чужому полі,
Бо на своїм нема місця,
Нема місця волі...

That one's own field-home lacks "воля" in this context is significant because of that word's connection with "доля," concerning which see below.

---

[34] For now I am documenting only the salient vocabulary of the poetry's shamanic mechanisms, so the passage quoted here contains only the *description* of the polarizations involved. How Shevchenko composes — or fails to compose — their textually-mediated *resolution* is examined in detail in the next chapter.

[35] A discussion of Shevchenko's relation to and use of the word "God" lies beyond the scope of this monograph, but clearly this is not always a Christian or even theological God. In the present example "God" seems to function more as an impersonal, amoral agency, akin to fate or karma. The poet's use of "доля" in this way is briefly considered below.

> Думи мої молодії —
> Понурії діти,
> І ви мене покинули!..
> Пустку натопити
> Нема кому...

Here being abandoned by one's children-thoughts explicitly results in losing the state of having a "хата"; it has become an "unheated empty house" (пустка) instead. In "The Epistle" it is not that your children are not letting you into the house; it is *what you are thinking (like)* that does not permit you entry into the balanced and contented state that Shevchenko so commonly codes as "хата."

Another example, also taken from "The Epistle," clearly establishes the "чуже поле" as the antipode of the (healthful) conditions identified with "своя хата."

> Не шукайте, не питайте
> Того, що немає
> І на небі, а не тілько
> На чужому полі.
> В своїй хаті своя й правда,
> І сила, і воля.
> (Lines 27-32)

As mentioned in note [35], Shevchenko is greatly concerned with the presence or absence of "воля" in the "(своя) хата"-condition, among others, as evidenced in lines 31-32 above. The word has commonly been viewed as referring to political freedom (with its secondary meaning of power of volition), and this remains an entirely valid reading. But additionally, and especially in the shamanic dimension of the texts, "воля" identifies itself with "доля": by sound, by appearing in hyphenated forms (доля-воля), and through functional proximity.

The issues surrounding Shevchenko's use of "доля" really require a separate dissertation, but since it functions as one of the chief indices of shamanic modality a few summary observations need to be made. Although generally (and largely accurately) translated as "fate/fortune/destiny," the word takes on an exceptional scope over the course of its implementation by Shevchenko — particularly where it combines closely with the "чужина" and "хата" fields as in the foregoing examples. Repeatedly, the writer focuses on the unsuccessful quest for *доля*[36] in certain distinct and reiterated cases, specifically those that follow the pattern already outlined: "чужина" (or its common, more intense equivalents "чуже поле" and "чужа хата") is identified with a "diseased" personal or cultural configuration, which subsumes at least the spiritual and psychological, and likely the social and physical realms as well. This configuration is described in terms of grief, general impotence, and death. Its polar opposite, sometimes explicitly cast as the sought-after resolution to the "чужина"-configurations, habitually signals itself through references to returning to one's хата and finding one's *доля* (there). "Доля," that is, finding it, in some generalized sense is the progression from dissonance to harmony, the elimination or reduction of hierarchically-mediated discord which results from the loss of communitas. But in individual instances of its use by Shevchenko it displays an undifferentiated polysemy whose total import must be assembled by the reader over the entire corpus.

---

[36] Rather than trying to decide on a single-word equivalent, I will simply use the Ukrainian word *доля* in italicized Cyrillic. In part this is intended to signal the likelihood of misleading the reader in fixing a one-to-one mapping when discussing Shevchenko's (and Ukrainian folkloric) usage of this word. In particular I want to avoid explicitly identifying *доля* with "fate," which is the conventional translation in English-language Shevchenko studies.

Even the folkloric genres present *доля* as something charged with inflectional complexity. Ukrainian sayings, folk songs and tales do *not* primarily cast *доля* as pertaining to destiny—though that meaning is not absent, of course. Rather the sense of *доля* tends towards various degrees of personification of an external force that acts throughout a person's life, but it is a force which the person can influence too. (The personification is invariably female and often takes the shape of the person's mother.) There may not be a single term for such an agency; the notion of "karma"

—itself not always clearly defined within the various teachings that use it—may appertain here to some extent. Certainly it is that which one get's from one's mother at birth, i.e. material and cultural legacy, including (indeed emphasizing) debts both concrete and intangible.

Породила мене мати
На святу неділю,
Дала мені лиху долю
Нічого не вдію.[37]

The above example epitomizes the typical folkloric formulation of the Ukrainian "birth-debt," commonly followed by descriptions of attempts, virtually never successful, to mitigate it—exactly as in Shevchenko.[38] Unlike the template texts that speak about the birth of the *доля*-problems, depictions of efforts at resolution are *not* standardized. Consider the continuation of the above text:

Повезу я лиху долю
В місто продавати,
Кажуть люди, лиха доля,
Не хтять купувати.

Ой купуйте, люди добрі,
Моя доля добра,
Як уп'ється, з кожним б'ється,
Не ночує дома.

---

[37] *Пісні Явдохи Зуїхи* (Kyiv, 1965) p. 684

[38] Again, a full comparison of the use of *доля* in Ukrainian folk songs with Shevchenko's remains outside of the scope of this work. Some preliminary discussion of these relationships is found in chapter seven.

Interpretation here must become wide, if not actually problematic. The transparent reference to prostitution reinforces a conceptualization of *доля* as a woman, one who concentrates within herself the adversities at the interface between the "я" and "люди," the "місто" and the "дім." At the same time this avowedly evil entity ("лиха доля") will turn good ("доля добра") if it is transferred to the "люди добрі," presumably in consequence of the shift to the "other," alien perspective or value system. Further, this qualitative shift is attributed solely to *доля*'s capacity for drunken promiscuity. While such folkloric constituting of the term is recognizable in Shevchenko's usage, the two differ in crucial ways. For now it is important only to establish the word's relevance in the (thus far restricted) set of shamanic markers, and the need for caution and latitude in its explication.

One more topos particularly relevant to Shevchenko's literary shamanism needs to be sketched in before proceeding with in-depth analyses of the major texts that operate in this mode. Like the хата-чужина and related dichotomies reviewed above, images of water play a major role in shamanically-mediated narrative. Unlike the former, however, the water-series resides in a much broader group of tokens. "Water," especially flowing water, and "sea" occur often in the poems and present no difficulties, but this category also includes such words as "dew" and "tears" (or references to weeping), which makes for a less crisp lexical array. Still, the water-related body of images can be profitably ordered for purposes of revealing the poetry's shamanic structure.

It turns out from studies of songs composed under declared shamanic conditions that water imagery commonly serves as a metaphor for the creation of verse itself.[39] Shevchenko has this too, though in his case flowing water seems to connote the stream of (poetic) knowledge that leads to empowering or integrated states — or outright shamanic trance — in an individual. We have already seen examples of this in lines 7 to 14 of "Kniazhna" and in the water images of "Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo." But the clearest prototype for such functionality happens to constitute wholly one of the later poems, "Teche voda z-pid iavora..." ("Water Flows from Beneath the sycamore..."), which follows in its entirety.

Тече вода з-під явора
Яром на долину.
Пишається над водою
Червона калина.
Пишається калинонька,
Явор молодіє,
А кругом їх верболози
Й лози зеленіють.

---

[39] Or generative acts in general. See for example Carol Clover "Skaldic Sensibility" *Arkiv for nordsk filologi* No. 93 (1978) p. 68.

Тече вода із-за гаю
Та попід горою.
Хлюпощуться качаточка
Помеж осокою.
А качечка випливає
З качуром за ними,
Ловить ряску, розмовляє
З дітками своїми.

Тече вода край города.
Вода ставом стала.
Прийшло дівча воду брати,
Брало, заспівало.
Вийшли з хати батько й мати
В садок погуляти,
Порадитись, кого б то їм
Своїм зятем звати?

Although he does not discuss this particular text, it is very likely that Pliushch would have identified it as highly charged with shamanic elements: the sycamore tree[40] of the first line can no doubt do service as an "allomorph of the shamanic tree of life," and similarly with the явір/калина pairing of lines 4-6.[41] But

---

[40] "Явір" translates as both "maple" and "sycamore." However, the more common word for maple, both in Ukrainian and Russian (though with different pronunciations), is "клен."

[41] Pliushch, "Shamanna poetyka..." p. 137 and footnote. These are the exact same male-female plant dyads that round out the symbolism at the end of "Prychynna" where they are further paired with two specific birds.

Посадили над козаком
Явір та ялину,
А в головах у дівчини
Червону калину.

Pliushch (more or less plausibly) identifies the birds as shamanic too, although he mistakenly says that the plants grew next to the graves by themselves, p. 137-38, something clearly contradicted the poem's shamanic functionality goes well beyond such loose associations.

Each of the three octaves begins with "Water flows..." but shows this occurring under different circumstances. In the first line it comes from under a tree which is already in a low-lying area, hence it is a spring, the source. Apparently thanks to this water, the guelder rose shows herself off, the maple stays youthful/is rejuvenated, the smaller flora around them thrive too. Water flows to bring about a state of harmony based on complementarity in the plant world.

Second octave: the water continues to flow, and does the same thing in the animal world. The male and female ducks abide with their brood, communing (розмовляє) in consonance and unity.[42]

But in the final section, the world of people, things change. Now the water's flow has reached the edge (!) of a human construct —*and it stops!* (lines 17-18). As she "takes" the water, the girl starts to sing, which is to say that poetic expression results from partaking of the elemental stream. Clearly Shevchenko, who so often casts himself in his poetry as the unmarried girl, can identify to some degree with this female figure. In part we do have

---

by the first word in line 214 above.

[42] Just as at the conclusion of "Prychynna," the paired plants are followed by paired birds.

the unified male-female symmetry here in the human world, but it is only in the parents, i.e. the past, who reside in the communitas of the "хата" (line 21) and the "садок." Their daughter, the present generation, has not attracted a son-in-law for them and thus has not completed the requirements of balance and wholeness of the poem's first two stanzas. Is this because the water has ceased flowing here? Is that why she is accessing the water, to start singing to attract her mate-complement and thereby restore the communitas state? Shevchenko does not explicitly say, only arranges the elements in their causal sequence: everything in the poem exists solely to underscore the absence revealed in its final line. Can this deficiency be rectified, and if so how? The thrice-repeated reference to water flowing, prominently placed in the first position in each octet, might be a clue. Other poems hint at the solution much more resolutely.

Another major water image with shamanic import is that of the sea. Pliushch correctly notes that "синєє море" symbolizes the boundary between the ordinary world and the one to which the shaman travels in his trance-journey, and also functions as a "road" for carrying out this journey.[43] But this fixed epithet of the "blue sea" encompasses considerably more, as subsequent analyses will show. For now, the circuit of lexical marker examples will be concluded by examining a brief work which ties together the main ones marshalled in this chapter, and to show how they interpenetrate with one another to shape shamanically framed passages or even whole texts such as this one.

---

[43] Pliushch, "Shamanna poetyka..." p. 136. He ascribes similar functions to forests and rivers in Shevchenko, thus possibly undermining the strength of his own argument by making it too all-inclusive.

Тече вода в синє море,
Та не витікає,
Шука козак свою долю,
А долі немає.
Пішов козак світ за очі;
Грає синє море,
Грає серце козацькеє,
А думка говорить:
"Куди ти йдеш, не спитавшись?
На кого покинув
Батька, неньку стареньку,
Молоду дівчину?
На чужині не ті люде —
Тяжко з ними жити!
Ні з ким буде поплакати,
Ні поговорити."

Сидить козак на тім боці,
Грає синє море.
Думав, доля зустрінеться —
Спіткалося горе.
А журавлі летять собі
Додому ключами.
Плаче козак — шляхи биті
Заросли тернами.

This is the complete second piece in the conventionally ordered *Kobzar*, one of four poems titled "Dumka." Standard exegesis of this short poem makes it out to be "patriotic" in a hortatory sort of way. Ukraine is where Ukrainians belong; foreign people and places will treat you badly; grief follows leaving the family. Shevchenko is thought to be promoting traditional values in a national context and expressing them in structures reminiscent of Ukrainian folk songs or sayings. But besides the unquestionably effective marriage of form with message that ensues, "Dumka" also offers a simple paradigm for a shamanic understanding of much of the rest of the corpus. The particular images that these lines employ — flowing water, blue sea, the cossack, old mother/young girl, "fate," etc. —and their arrangement constitute a key to the shamanic code or subtext of much of Shevchenko's poetry in general.

We have seen that the first two words ("Тече вода") of the first line refer to a free movement of a vital quality which supports conditions of peace and harmony, and that the remainder of the line ("into the blue sea") suggests the human attempt to access the flow and hence the state it engenders. So if the first line alludes to the successful shamanic entry into, say, collective memory or a condition of communitas or personal wholeness, then the second line ("But does not flow out") means that the transfer of shamanic knowledge does not occur out the other side, i.e. it does not move from that world through to the world of ordinary people. Lines 3 and 4 affirm this interpretation: the human being (here a Cossack, a common synecdoche for the generic Ukrainian) searches but cannot find his *доля*. After line 5 confirms that the Cossack is lost and cannot find his place in the world, the parallel established in the first four lines is reinforced in lines 6-7: the "playing" of the sea is echoed in the heart (play being associated with a free and unencumbered state, something like or identical with communitas). But the heart's apparent urge to merge with the state of the sea is countermanded by the mind, the voice of structure, which appropriately enough suggests that he has not asked permission (lines 8-9). This voice continues for another seven lines, outlining the difficulties of the cossack's sundered internal state. Lines 10-12 invoke precisely the incomplete trio of the third stanza of "Teche voda z-pid iavora..." (he is clearly the missing son-in-law who would complete the family).

The "чужина" and "не ті люде" of line 13 do not refer only, as is commonly made out, to physical displacement of Shevchenko outside of Ukraine's borders, although this was indeed the case at the time and the poem may be received at this level as well. In fact "не ті люде" are people who are not as they should be, who have lost a state they once had and are now consequently somewhere else, "[н]а чужині." Thus the following line ("It's difficult to live with them!") alludes not only to the difficulties experienced by a Ukrainian abroad but also to the poet's (for one example) alienation from his own compatriots who do not have the vital link that he does. Lines 15-16 ("Ні з ким буде поплакати,/ Ні поговорити.") will be echoed in such shamanically oriented passages as lines 81-84 and 87 of "Son," as analyzed below.

The concluding quatrain recapitulates the situation: the poignancy of his separation from his ideal state ("Сидить козак на *тім* боці," — emphasis supplied) is heightened by the presence of the "playing blue sea" right at hand but unaccessed. "Думав" is juxtaposed with "спіткалося горе," reiterating the cause-effect relationship between thinking (i.e. structure) and the "calamity" (loss of communitas). Meanwhile the cranes are flying "home" — another blatantly shamanic topos. For the Cossack the "beaten paths" — presumably roads home (again, communitas) — have been obstructed, and hence his grief. This closing couplet correlates with the poem's opening one and in so doing frames the text, stating in human-world terms what was initially stated in shaman-world language. In apparently stringing together some stock items (a Cossack, the sea, crying over one's unhappy lot, some birds in flight) Shevchenko has presented the essence of his own predicament and perhaps that of many Ukrainians in shamanic terms: separation from one's own root.

Chapter Five

THE POETRY AS NARRATIVE THERAPY

> "In all the world, past and present, even among saints and wise men, there has never been anyone who could understand what I say, and even I myself, though I am saying it, do not understand."
> —*Morihei Ueshiba*

In the preceding chapter we identified some of the main items in Shevchenko's inventory of shamanic markers—lexical aggregates functioning to signal instances of that distinct literary modality. These coded but largely consistent indicators track moments at which the text turns to an alternate signifying order, one where the arrangement of seemingly commonplace poetic or "folkloric" objects reveals a non-standard psychological register addressing Shevchenko's own creative process/method and the perceptional apparatus of Ukrainians at the time in general. Simply put, these textual structures point out where the writing has become shamanic, and the analyses of the foregoing poems show the details of this aspect's implementation.

But Shevchenko's literary shamanism is not limited to the mere presence of verbal subroutines of this kind. For beyond displaying these specialized features of poetic self-constitution, his verse also organizes itself along lines of larger discourse acts: the on-going "rhetoric of healing" first mentioned in chapter one. As already discussed, the arguments around Shevchenko's stature as a writer are far too polarized and protracted to be plausibly attributable to inquiry in terms of standard measures of literary merit, i.e., issues of periodization, prosody, genre, formal devices, "themes," language, and the like. Reasoning that tries to place Shevchenko definitively as political, a "folk poet," or hold him to some equally prefabricated category continues to fail to account for his disproportionate impression on his audience. There have been many folk poets; most literature has a political dimension; but none (at least in Ukrainian letters) has inspired even remotely the amount and intensity of critical response—extra-literary as well as academic — associated with Shevchenko. After all, V. Belinsky's assessment of Shevchenko's poetry as at best mediocre is directly subverted by the quantity of resources he expended in making and subsequently defending this position.[1] The popular iconic portrayal of the writer as a folk minstrel extolling Ukrainian pastoral and Cossack life does not explain repeated Imperial interdictions on commemorating anniversaries of his death—he was far from the only one writing about these topics—or for that matter the scale of participation in these commemorations regardless of the bans. Examples of similar inconsistencies can be easily multiplied, of course, but what unites them is precisely that they exemplify the struggle for ownership of the authority that Shevchenko's writings have held in the Ukrainian consciousness-forming process that was mentioned at the very outset of this monograph. At issue here is simply power: the potency gained and the vitality returned following identity restabilization or reinterpretation, be it for individuals or in larger social units. Shevchenko's shamanic discourse turns out to mediate directly in the brokering of that power.

---

[1] Victor Swoboda, "Shevchenko and Belinsky" in *Shevchenko and the Critics* George S. N Luckyj, ed. (Toronto, 1980) p. 303 summarizes the relationship between the two writers.

Shamanically negotiated empowerment and modern literary theory intersect in a particularly productive way in Michel Foucault's discussion of "knowledge as power."[2] According to the French thinker's understanding, power is not an empirical, objective fact bearing controlling or nurturing force. Rather its constitutive and shaping influences reside in specifically constructed ideas, which in turn arrange themselves into narratives — the "stories" into which individuals and groups organize their day-to-day life experiences. These narratives, in turn, operate as the "truths" which actually specify people's lives, delineating a form of individuality that forges persons as

---

[2] These issues lie at the centre of Foucault's thought and philosophical career, and are amply and thoroughly documented. The partial summary given here comes mainly from Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (N.Y. 1980).

"docile bodies" and co-opts them into behaviors that support the propagation of "global" and "unitary" knowledge. As subjects of the power concomitant with this knowledge, we are "judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertaking, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power."[3]

Foucault further argues that the deliberate isolation of specific knowledges from ambient information structures in general invests their discourses[4] with the means of power. He is speaking of the development of "objective reality" discourses that qualify certain knowledge constructs for positions at the top of the hierarchy, the "dominant" stories or Grand Narratives that control the perceptions and responses of individuals and entire cultures. Opposed to these are the "subjugated knowledges," of which Foucault distinguishes two main classes: one that has been displaced from its earlier privileged position and perhaps even written out of the record by the ascendance of a competing set of discourses (he calls the supplanted class "erudite" knowledges), and another whose members maintain a degree of circulation but survive only in marginalized, lowly ranked forms ("indigenous" knowledges).[5]

---

[3] Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 94.

[4] "Discourses ... [are] ... practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak." M. Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (N.Y. 1972) p. 49.

Now the recovery of such disqualified if autonomous knowledges depends on the presence of an adequate cognitive, especially recollective, space in which their details can be "performed" (recall from chapter two that the performative aspect of ritual language contributes to its power-inducing function). This secured, the primacy of the dominant knowledges can be challenged. Foucault uses the word "criticism" to describe this activity, criticism "whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought."

> I also believe that it is through the re-emergence of these low-ranking knowledges, these unqualified, even directly disqualified knowledges ... and which involve what I would call a popular knowledge ... that it is through the re-appearance of this knowledge, of these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work. (*Power/Knowledge*, p. 82)

Such "insurrection" of subjugated knowledge has a direct counterpart in the shaman's signature task of replacing one cognitive order with another, preferable one. Both processes strive to restructure experience through rewriting the stories

---

[5] Examples of the former might be the ideas central to the afrocentric viewpoint, or the postulated value systems of putatively pre-patriarchal societies. In the popular/indigenous class are the therapeutic practices relegated to the unreassuring status of "alternative" by the rise and entrenchment of "conventional" allopathic medicine.

(especially of hierarchy and identity) in such a manner as to redistribute the power they confer on their subscribers. Specifically, the shaman identifies a disruption in the symbolic order, and attempts a shift either back to the original equilibrium or to an alternate story designed to correct a condition of relative powerlessness and thus to bring about a "cure." In doing so he avails himself of a stock of culturally available discourses that are considered appropriate and relevant to the goal of restoring the "health" of the overarching identity narrative.

As explained in chapter two, the key insight here is that problems associated with identity illness, power depletion, and psychic or spiritual trauma *can be mediated through language*. At the very least the shaman (exactly like the psychiatrist) names the problem, next externalizes it, and then provides a specific language through which rhetorical relocation may be effected. The externalization step tries to induce a separation of the clients from the dominant "truth" discourses that repress or injure them, so that what had previously been perceived as "inherent facts" now becomes merely a range of options to chose from, a collection of objects existing outside of the people they affect. Opportunities appear for selecting replacement objects in place of the current offending ones, or for rearranging their order and relationships, which amounts to a therapy based on the manipulation of linguistic entities.

This is where securing a customized language comes in. In practice the desirable outcome of therapy manifests as generation of alternate stories that incorporate vital, indeed privileged, but hitherto neglected aspects of past or present life experience, and insofar as these stories embody "other" (in fact displaced) knowledge, it can be argued that the identification and provision of the space for the performance of these stories/knowledges makes up the central focus of the therapeutic endeavor. Such performance of alternate meaning provides a basis for the identification, then regeneration of subjugated stories, from where one can open up a rhetorical space for the circulation of the knowledge they carry.

Formal therapies based on the above ideas do exist and enjoy substantial clinical success. One of the most relevant ones for the model of shamanic re-empowerment practices goes by the name of Narrative Therapy (also known as Re-authoring Therapy), and whose leading exponents include Edward Bruner and Michael White.[6] Its principal tenets build on Foucault essentially as follows: Lives are constituted through narrative: a personal story (self-narrative) determines the shape of the expression of our lived experience.[7] Externalizing conversation provides an account of how item *x* has been affecting patients' lives and relationships. To enter such a conversation amounts to making a mental-perceptual shift, one involving substantial deconstruction and re-storying. The re-storied account then leads to an abatement of crisis in consequence of the arrival of a co-interpreted understanding of one's status and a revised outlook for the future.

---

[6] For some reason this variety of psychological treatment is especially popular in New Zealand and Australia. A good account, complete with detailed clinical case studies, is Michael White and David Epston, *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (New York 1990); see also Michael White, *Re-Authoring Lives: Interviews and Essays* (Adelaide, 1995).

If the stories we have about lives or certain aspects of existence in general are negotiated and distributed within communities of people, then it makes sense to engage communities-as-units in the renegotiations of identity. A population can jointly develop a "counter-" or "alternative plot," complete with a distinctive name, or may simply rename the dominant plot. This process of naming and renaming of alternate stories greatly facilitates the ascription of meaning to a whole range of experiences—including past ones.[8] For the task of arranging both individuals' and societies' experiences across time must proceed in such a way as to arrive at a coherent account of themselves and the world around them, so that to develop this account the specific experiences of events of the past and present as well as those predicted to occur in the future have to be connected (and explicated) in a linear sequence. The resulting discourse is called a story or "self-narrative,"[9]; when successful, it provides its subscribers with a sense of continuity and meaning in their lives, which then forms the basis for the interpretation (and further storying) of subsequent experience. In other words, the reception of any emergent event is as much future-shaped as it is past-determined.

---

[7] "These stories are neither a description of a life nor a reflection of it. They are not a map of a territory. Nor is it a perspectival notion, that a specific life-story is just one of many equally valid perspectives on life, so that if persons relate painful experiences, all we need do is to encourage them to enter into a different perspective on their lives and to tell a different story. These are *representationalist assumptions* that are based on the tradition of fundamentalist thought, not on the constructionist orientation that accompanies the narrative metaphor. I'm not talking about a description of life, but about the structure of life itself." Michael White, *Re-Authoring Lives*, p. 14.

How these facts can be engaged for purposes of therapeutic re-storying is illustrated in the results of some of Edward

---

[8] "It has been argued that memory is structured according to narrative, and in this [therapeutic] work we so often see a restructuring of memory." M. White, *Re-Authoring Lives*, p. 28

[9] M. M. Gergen and K. J. Gergen, "The Social Construction of Narrative Accounts" in M. M. Gergen and K. J. Gergen (eds.), *Historical Social Psychology* (Hillsdale, 1984).

Bruner's field work with Native North Americans.[10] In discussing his subjects' ethnographic stories, Bruner reveals how the global understanding and interpretation of their living circumstances shifted radically with the generation of a new story that proposed an alternate history and future. In the 1930s and '40s the dominant story summarizing the Native North American constructed the past as glorious and the future as assimilation. In attributing meaning to prevailing conditions through the prism of this story, anthropologists and Native North Americans alike interpreted the "facts" of the daily lives of these peoples as reflective of breakdown and disorganization, as a transitional state along the route from glory to assimilation. This interpretation led to "knowledge" which in turn engendered significant real-world effects, for example justifying certain interventions of the dominant culture, including those relating to the appropriation of territories.

Then in the 1950s a new story emerged, one that constructed the past as exploitation and the future as resurgence. It has not been shown nor is it likely to be shown that the "facts" of quotidian existence changed significantly for Native North Americans in this period, yet with the advent of the revised dominant story, a new interpretation of these facts arose. No longer did they reflect disorganization, but rather resistance. This new perception also led to real-life effects, such as the development of a movement that confronted the dominant culture with the issue of land rights. Bruner concludes:

---

[10] Edward Bruner, "Ethnography as Narrative" in Victor Turner and Edward Bruner (eds.), *The Anthropology of Experience* (University of Illinois, 1986).

> In my view, we began with a narrative that already contains a beginning and an ending, which frame and hence enable us to interpret the present. It is not that we initially have a body of data, the facts, and we must then construct a story or theory to account for them. Instead... the narrative structures we construct are not secondary narratives about data but primary narratives that establish what is to count as data. New narratives yield new vocabulary, syntax, and meaning in our ethnographic accounts; they define what constitute the data of those accounts. (*The Anthropology of Experience*, p. 143)

Drawing the parallels between this example and the prevailing psycho-social dynamics in the Ukraine of Shevchenko's time requires no great modification of detail.

Nor are additional instances of such narrative-mediated transitions rare in the anthropological literature in general. Therapeutic approaches like Michael White's draw heavily on scholarly examinations of ritual process of the "rite of passage" variety as described in seminal works by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner.[11] Known collectively as "the transition model," these strategies share a three-point description of their essential stages, commonly identifying a:

---

[11] The classical studies underlying Re-authoring and other rhetorically situated therapies are Arnold van Gennep (Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle Cafee, transl.) *The Rites of Passage* (London, 1960), and V. Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Chicago, 1969).

> 1. separation phase—role/identity determined to be no longer viable;
> 2. liminal (betwixt and between) phase — trauma, confusion, disorganization;
> 3. reincorporation phase — arrival at new status and attendant understanding thereof.

Presenting crises are engaged and managed by locating them in relation to these phases.[12]

Proceeding from precisely these ideas, Thomas Csordas developed the model of "rhetorical healing" described in chapter two based on his fieldwork with ritual(ized) treatment procedures employed by Catholic Pentecostals in the United States. His methodology served as a template for many other researchers, among them Sidney Greenfield investigating Spiritist ritual healing in Rio de Janeiro, wherein patients are "moved" from one social world to another by means of a rhetorical and symbolic transformation of self-perception.[13] Greenfield notes that this rearrangement has salient features in common with the three-step religious conversion processes described by Turner and summarized above.

---

[12] This schema is taken from Michael White's *Narrative Means*, p. 7. A more detailed exposition, including clinical applications and case studies, may be found in *Experience, Contradiction, Narrative, & Imagination: Selected Papers of Michael White & David Epston 1989-1991* (Adelaide, 1992) pp. 12-16 and passim.

[13] Sidney M. Greenfield, "Legacies From the Past and Transitions to a "Healed" Future in Brazilian Spiritist Therapy" *Anthropologica* XXXV (1993) p. 23.

> Turner's point is that when individuals go through a ritual transition they leave what for them is ordinary society with its normative rules and behaviors and enter what he refers to as liminality, a state that is betwixt and between, full of ambiguity and characterized by *communitas* — and anti-structure — before returning eventually to what is a new state with new rules, behaviors, and expectations. (pp. 34-35)[14]

The author further argues that the massive interest in Spiritism and similar religious groups proceeds from the "symptoms" caused by large scale political, economic, demographic and other changes undergone by Brazilian society in a remarkably short span of time: mass unemployment, malnutrition, unchecked crime, uncontrollable reversals of position and privilege. Subscribers to the Spiritist movement experience relief from these symptoms (that is, from the anxiety and personal instability they cause) after receiving exposure to ritualized language of co-interpretation, identity definition and re-classification. Above all, they are slowly inducted into the religious life of the Spiritist community itself, where moral precepts are expressed as political order.

---

[14] Grabowicz also invokes the Turner/van Gennep three-phase model in describing Shevchenko's mythopoesis (e.g. page 121 of *PAM*), but only to map the poet's non-historical depiction of time onto real, or chronological, time. He does note on p. 148 that "Ukraine's movement through these states clearly constitutes a rite of passage," but does not draw any connections between specific texts and any of the states. Neither is there any commentary on the passage itself beyond observing, appropriately, that Shevchenko's own time was "a world in profound disharmony, suspended in injustice and abnormality."

"At first contact the [Spiritist] centre with its many activities appears to them to be a community characterized, in contrast with their ordinary world of hierarchy, power, and authority, by egalitarianism. In contrast with the growing impersonalism of urban Brazil, the newcomer experiences much of what Turner meant by *communitas*."[15]

In Csordas's words, the particular kind of rhetoric employed here "redirects the supplicant's attention to new aspects of actions and experiences." Applied to the case of Shevchenko, this would mean that readers are exposed, perhaps for the first time in a way that is meaningful to them, not only to the dual nature of the sources of Ukrainian sociocultural identity, but also to mythically determined concepts of Cossackdom, serfdom, and personal or national victimization. Even his use of the word "Ukraine"—Україна—was a novel implementation in contemporary practice.[16] Furthermore, the new worldview's presentation registers with the audience in such a way as to relate directly to the sense of loss, pain, and social destabilization that it was experiencing. Reframed this way, the readers' perception-response apparatus (as Csordas puts it, their "thinking") becomes directed away from their former understanding of their condition to an integrated, healed one.[17]

---

[15] Greenfield, p. 35. This reincorporation phase, the article goes on to say, culminates in the petitioner being fully reintegrated into a new social milieu and being redefined in terms of it perceptions and mindset. He or she leaves the ambiguity and distress of the liminal stage to emerge with an altered outlook, including new boundaries of consciousness, in which both the patient and the illness have been conceptually reframed. This sort of linguistic (and hence cognitive) reformulation applies at least in part to the shamanic function of Shevchenko's verse, as will be seen below.

Besides the tension between the perspectives of past autonomy and present servitude, Shevchenko was faced with an absence of a unified Ukrainian identity in the early 19th century.[18] Aside from the instability ensuing from inversions of military and political fortunes, the people living on the territory we now call Ukraine variously called themselves Ruthenians, South Russians, Little Russians (the standard but not-quite-correct translation for "малороссы"), Roxolanians—to say nothing of names for the various Carpathian groupings. A corresponding absence of linguistic standardization did not help. Further hindering discrete, unitary self-perception was the fact that Russian and Polish cultural and political identities *were* much more strongly defined at that time than the Ukrainian one, and were in fact providing their own written versions of Ukraine's place in the order of things.[19] It is this background of poorly delineated social identity commingled with the specific historical dislocations outlined in the previous chapter that Shevchenko's poetry appears to engage with restitutive effect.

---

[16] Shevchenko's contemporary, the pre-Romantic ("Kharkiv school") poet Levko Borovykovs'kyj, for example, does not use the word "Україна" at all in the whole of his Ukrainian-language poetic output. Another pre-Romantic, A. Metlyns'kyj, who published approximately a decade later than Borovykovs'kyj, employs the Ukraine-word a total of six times.

[17] The disempowering events in Ukrainian history to which much of Shevchenko's shamanic poetry appears to be a response is well documented and continues to receive considerable scholarly attention. A series of six articles addressing the question "Does Ukraine Have a History?" (the title of the first article by Mark Von Hagen) begins on p. 658 of *Slavic Review* vol. 54 no. 3 (Fall 1995) and treats this topic in some detail. A comprehensive study is Zenon E. Kohut, *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy: Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate 1760s-1830s* (Cambridge MA, 1988).

[18] This fact is generally much underappreciated. The received opinion, popular but inaccurate, is that the "Ukraine" of which Shevchenko speaks constituted a clearly defined country and nation (though not, of course, state) at the time — a perception which follows, ironically, almost entirely from the iterative

Shevchenko begins the process of rhetorical restructuring by setting forth in opposition the two states whose inherent discord is to be resolved. First, he clearly and repeatedly establishes that there do in fact exist these two antipodes, which

---

processing in the collective awareness of Shevchenko's poetry.

[19] These and several other such factors, highly integral to the dynamics of the Ukrainian national revival in which Shevchenko's contribution is so crucial, are summarized in the first chapter of Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith* (Cambridge University Press, 1997). The endnotes to this section of the book provide a somewhat wider set of references.

for our purposes can be best represented by the "past glory, present grief" formulation.[20] This would correspond to the first of the three stages in the Van Gennep-Turner transition model: separation. At this level the reader is simply made aware of a proposed schema wherein two states have been antagonistically situated, usually in mythical-temporal (as described by Grabowicz) terms.

It is telling that some of Shevchenko's most quoted lines originate from one or another of the many poems addressing this dual character of the contemporary Ukrainian experience. "Do Osnov"ianenka" serves as an excellent example, in part because its shamanic features provide most of the poem's textual content in addition to establishing its primary modality. Already in its famous opening line (Б'ють пороги; місяць сходить) we see a compression of the essential images from the first 8 lines of "Prychynna."[21] Both the terrestrial and celestial entities partake in the systemics set forth in the previous chapter: flowing water as shamanically generated writing, and rising moon in the spirit-familiar invocation function elsewhere performed by the evening star (e.g. "Kniazhna"). Leonid Pliushch in his essay on Shevchenko's shamanic poetics offers a parallel passage to illustrate this function for the moon exactly as it behaves in the introductory section of "Kniazhna," and several other places. He begins by quoting lines 15 - 18 of "Hajdamaky," which refer to the moon, and adds the relevant explication.

---

[20] As already described, the polarity to which Shevchenko's poetry responds therapeutically has been characterized in a number of ways: adjusted/non-adjusted selves, the St. Petersburg persona versus the peasant one, the tension between conditions of serfdom and a free Cossack state. Singling out one specific dyad from among these is not crucial to demonstrating the presence and action of rhetorical healing, so the generalized duality that Shevchenko addresses will be taken to be the past-present one unless otherwise noted.

[21] Perhaps because these words make up the "gateway" into the rest of the oeuvre, they have invited a great deal of grandiose commentary, much of it oriented on issues relevant to a shamanic

> Ти вічний без краю!.. Люблю розмовлять,
> Як з братом, з сестрою, розмовлять з тобою,
> Співать тобі думу, що ти ж нашептав.
> Порай мені ще раз, де дітись з журбою? (I, 71)

> "Місяць тут неявно пов'язаний з тим світом, з раєм: з-за "краю" досить прозоро визирають образи. Тому й може місяць радити-раяти поетові, як творчо сублімувати свою земну, крайову, обмежену журбу. Поет відлунює Місяцеві-Луні ним-нею нашептану пісню-думу. Місяць, отже, грає щодо поета роль Первошамана, Музи чи Генія,

---

reading of Shevchenko. For example, Ievhen Sverstiuk in his recent collection of essays *Shevchenko i chas* (Kyiv, 1996) imputes an elemental collective *social* force to what are arguably standard Romantic nature images.

> «Шевченко почав писати свої обурливі твори від 1837 року», — визначали жандарми при арешті поета. Вже перші відомі нам рядки Шевченка —
>
> Реве та стогне Дніпр широкий,
> Сердитий вітер завива —
>
> вражають величчю й стриманою могутньою силою. У контексті «Кобзаря» — це символічний заспів до пісні про грізний клекіт закутої сили народу. (page 14)

шаманного духа-покровителя.[22]

Pliushch's observations continue to apply to the poem as it unfolds. Reeds ask questions of the river, a sea gull echoes them, burial mounds converse with the wind... All these reveal the shamanic status of the poem's beginning. But the separation phase takes up a stark centrality as early as the third line.

> Б'ють пороги; місяць сходить,
> Як і перше сходив...
> Нема Січі, пропав і той,
> Хто всім верховодив!
> 5 Нема Січі; очерети
> У Дніпра питають:
> «Де-то наші діти ділись,

---

[22] L. I. Pliushch, "Shamanna poetyka T. H. Shevchenka" *Filosofs'ka i sotsiolohichna dumka*, No. 6, 1992 p. 140. (The notation I, 71 refers to the article's source of text, the six-volume 1963 Kyiv edition.) The parallel with "Do Osnov"ianenka" becomes even clearer when we compare that poem's first two lines

> Б'ють пороги; місяць сходить
> Як і перше сходив...

with lines 7 to 10 of "Hajdamaky" which come right before the passage cited by Pliushch:

> А сонечко встане, як перше вставало,
> І зорі червоні, як перше плили,
> Попливуть і потім, і ти, білолиций,
> 10 По синьому небу вийдеш погулять,

Thus the functional equivalence of the sun, moon, and stars is established. Both passages appear at the very outset of their respective poems, and so serve as markers of shamanic modality. The word "перше," also common to both excerpts, points not to history i.e. "the past," as is so often assumed of these poems, but to the primordial and unchanging nature of the world from which the poet is presently speaking; the real-world sun, after all, cannot *not* rise (cf. line 7 above).

Де вони гуляють?»

(lines 1-8)

"The Sich is gone." This abrupt statement of pivotal absence generates the rest of the poem as a response to itself, starting with it being positioned as perhaps the reason for a leaderless condition (lines 3 - 4). Line 5 says it again: the loss of the Sich *means* a loss of both "him who headed everything"[23] (line 4) and of "our children"[24] (line 7), i.e. the family has been lost. Shevchenko is speaking here not of the disappearance of the Zaporozhian island fortress, but of a vanished internal stance or state, that of a communitas-like salutary order, and couching this communication in folklorically stylized words about Cossacks and broad, non-specific historical references. Through a specialized manipulation of this display case of stock images he is actually shamanizing a meliorative linguistic response to at least his personal psychic malaise. Normally, a reference to the historical events culminating in the dismantlement of the Sich settlements in 1775 might be expected to allude to something specifically associated with them: a proper name or particular event, perhaps. Yet for all the significance of there being "no more Sich," in spite of this being the avowed subject of the poem, Shevchenko does nothing of the sort. Instead he produces a text on the topic of trying (partly resolving, mostly failing) to *talk* about—that is, to process cognitively—whatever it was that happened. True, he does use the departed world of the Cossacks as a metaphoric framing device—hence the mention of unspecified battles with collective foes (e.g. lines 23-24: Де кров ляха, татарина // Морем червоніла...). This practice, hardly restricted to the present poem, accounts for the persistence of a "historical" classification of "Do Osnov"ianenka" and similar pieces;[25] it may

---

[23] Namely, a father-function. Shevchenko will refer to this figure as "батько" several times later in the poem. That he also calls him "батько-отаман" (line 57) lends support to the common surface reading of this piece as a "historical" lament.

[24] For reasons of space, the "children" topos was not included in chapter four's survey of shamanic markers. For a brief explanation and examples, see the discussion of "Dumy moi" in chapter seven.

---

[25] For example, "Ivan Pidkova" or several passages in "Hajdamaky." Referring to a particular class of verse of this type, G. Grabowicz notes in *PAM* that "[t]hese poems are either exclusively or largely meditations or reflections on history, that is, either on the Ukrainian past, most often the decline and fall of a formerly free existence, or on a specific moment." But faced with questions about the specific, objective referents of these texts, he allows that

> "the poems here do not tell a story, they are not constructed around a real or fictional event. By that very reason, perhaps, by the absence of what some might call the epic factor, they gain in emotional and especially symbolic intensity; as such they constitute some of the most politically and rhetorically charged of Ševčenko's works." (p. 25)

Grabowicz goes on to conclude that a "transmission of sacred knowledge" takes place here, and the determinant thereof lies in "modality of approach" as well as form/genre, among other factors (p. 28). The whole issue of Shevchenko's historical mode receives be more accurate to say that such works are historicized performance-texts operating shamanically.

Performance, in fact, emerges as a dominant feature of the poem under discussion. The “thematic” assertion that the Sich is gone is followed immediately by a series of ritualized questions posed, significantly, by and amid natural phenomena, questions which act to reinforce further the absence of the “children” (lines 8 and 10). These questions intensify into the anaphora of lines 16-18, where they form a contentless lament addressing the “наші” (clearly opposed to “чужі,” as in line 62: Кругом чужі люде...) and demanding that they come back (lines 19 and 25).

> Чайка скиглить літаючи,
> 10 Мов за дітьми плаче;
> Сонце гріє, вітер віє
> На степу козачім.
> На тім степу скрізь могили
> Стоять та сумують;
> 15 Питаються у буйного:
> «Де наші панують?
> Де панують, бенкетують?
> Де ви забарились?
> Верніteся! Дивітеся —
>
> (lines 9-19)

Like the missing “children” from the generalized Cossack past, no humans are currently present either.[26] So unconditional is their

---

a solid treatment beginning on page 24 of *PAM*.

[26] This lack of human agency may be seen as further evidence that Shevchenko does not want to discuss the historical Sich here literally. It is not a “real” world he is describing; a scene built up as a single tableau opens with the moon rising but has the sun

absence that the Cossacks themselves are not even mentioned directly — a further indication that the "historical" motifs of this poem should not be understood as literal. And just as the absence-questions were introduced by birds and burial mounds, the answers when they finally come in line 25 and following are provided by the sea i.e. the shaman-world.[27]

> Вернітеся!» — «Не вернуться! —
> Заграло, сказало
> Синє море. — Не вернуться,
> Навіки пропали!»
> Правда, море, правда, синє!
> Такая їх доля:
> Не вернуться сподівані,
> Не вернеться воля.
> Не вернуться запорожці,
> Не встануть гетьмани,
> Не покриють Україну
> Червоні жупани!
>
> (lines 25-36)

The case for the shamanic nature and origin of the sea's voice in these lines finds support in the parallel between line 29 and a passage from near the end of "Perebendia," examined in detail in the following chapter. There Shevchenko addresses his

---

shining ten lines later. Instead, sections of the poem perform transitions between different forms of identity-informing cognition.

[27] We have seen on pp. 133-134 of this thesis how Shevchenko's use of the fixed epithet "синє(є) море" often signals a transition from the "ordinary" world to the shamanic one. When found together with the "playing"-verb, as in lines 26-27 (Заграло, сказало / Синє море. — Не вернуться,), the meaning becomes that of knowledge being conveyed from the shamanic world.

quintessential shaman-bard with an authorial evaluation:

> Добре єси, мій кобзарю,
> Добре, батьку, робиш,
> Що співати, розмовляти
> На могилу ходиш![28]
> (Perebendia, lines 80-83)

It is in this 29th line of "Do Osnov"ianenka" (Правда, море, правда, синє!) too that Shevchenko switches to the author's own voice, or at least to a narrational *я*. As the blue sea "plays-speaks" (line 26), so does the minstrel-shaman figure. His first statement confirms the absences spoken of by the natural phenomena in the first 24 lines, now using an anaphora of five lines (31-35). Moreover, these are introduced as a consequence of their *доля* in line 30, which is another demonstrated marker of shamanic modality. These five lines, in emphatically denying the possibility of returning (or returning to) a departed order, actually function as a prelude to an attempt to recapture at least the symbolic structure of the lost psychic state. Shevchenko does this to varying degrees in several poems; an example very close to the one given here uses the same "returning"-verb to a similar purpose:

---

[28] Significantly, the lines immediately following these in "Perebendia"

> Ходи собі, мій голубе,
> Поки не заснуло
> Твоє серце, та виспівуй,

approximate those that also close out "Do Osnov"ianenka."

> Нехай ще раз усміхнеться
> Серце на чужині,
> Поки ляже в чужу землю
> В чужій домовині.
> (lines 101-104)

The surface structures here make reference to death, but the shamanically defined meanings allude to undesirable transformations of spirit. These ideas are developed more fully in chapter six.

> У Києві на Подолі
> Було колись... І ніколи
> Не вернеться, що діялось,
> Не вернеться сподіване,
> Не вернеться... А я, брате,
> Таки буду сподіватись,
> Таки буду виглядати,
> Жалю серцю завдавати.
> (Chernets', lines 1-8)

An almost identical anaphora (lines 3-5) confirms the impossibility of reinstating "що діялось," what was going on,[29] but then the immediately following words declare the poet's firm ("таки") intention to await/expect precisely what he has just insisted is irretrievable. His response to the tension between the irrevocable and the anticipated/envisioned is the spiritual pain of line eight. This is the stark realization of the separation phase and the start of the liminal phase with its heartache, sense of breakdown and possible collapse.[30]

---

[29] These two words in the Ukrainian text, meaning "what was happening" or "what the situation was," are curiously indefinite given that they refer to the ostensible topic at hand. Shevchenko goes on to fill in some details, but the undetermined and perhaps unknown nature of that which "will not come back" suggests that it might be an internal state as much as a set of outer circumstances.

In "Do Osnov"ianenka," the description of the liminal phase occupies only lines 37 to 41 and is not developed to nearly the same extent as in many of the other poems.

> Обідрана, сиротою
> Понад Дніпром плаче;
> Тяжко-важко сиротині,
> А ніхто не бачить...
> Тілько ворог, що сміється...

Shevchenko's standard image of the orphan transparently symbolizes Ukraine (since line 38 locates it "by the Dnipro"), and the fact that "nobody sees" (line 40) the orphan's plight indicates that the problem does not lie in an external set of circumstances. That "only the enemy" (line 41) can see the suffering corroborates the internal nature of this foe, similar to the "вража кров" in line 19 of "Zapovit." Furthermore, the transition from the poem's liminal section to one bidding for a reincorporation phase begins with direct speech to this enemy (line 42: Смійся, лютий враже!), and from there proceeds to construct itself entirely as an address directed at that persona.

Thirteen lines following this juncture (44-56) set forth the third phase of the van Gennep/Turner model as it applies to the poem under consideration. Here Shevchenko tries to provide a receiving context for the crisis he has brought to light, the better to reconstruct it within terms that are empowering rather than debilitated and devitalized — but without necessarily denying its distressing features.

---

[30] Other moments in Shevchenko's text which follow a virtually identical pattern are lines 15-16 of "Tarasova nich" («Була колись гетьманщина / Та вже не вернеться!..), and 27-28 of "N. Markevychu («Було колись—минулося, / Не вернеться знову».). Both poems are thoroughly shamanic in the same way as "Do Osnov"ianenka."

> Смійся, лютий враже!
> Та не дуже, бо все гине —
> Слава не поляже;
> Не поляже, а розкаже,
> Що діялось в світі,
> Чия правда, чия кривда
> І чиї ми діти.
> Наша дума, наша пісня
> Не вмре, не загине...
> От де, люде, наша слава,
> Слава України!
> Без золота, без каменю,
> Без хитрої мови,
> А голосна та правдива,
> Як господа слово.
> (Do Osnov"ianenka, lines 42-56)

Essentially, this passage *affirms the source* of the renegotiation of Ukrainian identity and unequivocally names the conduit which leads to that source. The foundation of re-apprehended self-perception is located in *слава*,[31] and the access to *слава* will be verbal or at least something closely associated with verbal creation (not only is "слава" phonetically similar to "слово" but these two words frame the passage in question). The progression of words signifying *слава's* orality moves from the mundane to the divine: розкаже, дума, пісня, господа слово. But it does not include "crafty" language[32] (line 54), nor will it depend on external wealth or power (line 53).

---

[31] As with the word *доля* in chapter four, *слава* will not be held to any single translation, but will simply be given in Cyrillic italics. Of course the meaning "glory" is primary, but Shevchenko's usage is so layered and idiosyncratic as to make a one-word equivalent misleading. See also the subsequent discussion.

In fact the entity Shevchenko has chosen to call *слава* has remarkable properties, far beyond the normal domain of the word's denotations. First, in line 43 the author notes that "everything perishes"—but not *слава*. More, *слава* has the power to speak of the world's workings (line 46), to sort out justice from injustice and to reveal lineage (lines 47 and 48). The next two lines repeat the idea that this sort of discourse is immortal—in conspicuous contrast to the earlier listing of what *has* perished with the passing of the Sich. Finally, lines 51 and 52 drive the point home: what is gone—be it understood as the historical Cossack state or a state of spiritual grace—must be weighed in terms of what is *not* gone, what can be recovered and used from that earlier situation, and what is ultimately significant and potent. The poet rounds out this central idea in the last four lines of the reïncorporation section of the work (53-56) by reminding his reader that this key resource—*слава*—draws its merit neither from the material nor the intellectual (that is, not from the usual human world), but instead resembles the clear, true "word of the Lord." Thus this *слава-слово* refers to no ordinary verbal artifact, but to a telescoping of both domains, with the latter contributing its sense of *logos*—the primordial creative principle.

---

[32] The phrase "хитра мова" immediately suggests a cardinal point make by Ivan Vyshens'kyj in the defense of "true" faith as opposed to false, deceitful ones.

Up to the end of line 56, then, the tripartite transition model fits "Do Osnov"ianenka" quite well. Lines 3 to 36 cover the separation stage, setting forth a series of absences that suggests, through a set of shamanically marked voices, a discontinuity of national identity; lines 37-41 briefly sketch in the pain and disenfranchisement of the liminal phase; and the reincorporation phase spanning lines 42 to 56 proposes a way to proceed by salvaging the core excellence of what has (apparently) been lost. This last step, in addition, is presented as being at least partly linguistic in nature; there seems to be an awareness here that the problem requires a manipulation of a symbolic order.

But then Shevchenko does an extraordinary thing. From this point and to the end of the piece, nearly half the poem's length, he enters into a meta-discussion of what he has just projected. His interlocutor, moreover, is nothing less than the vanished internal state at issue, personified here as the father-*otaman* presumably referred to in lines 3-4. Having described a shamanic negotiation of a rite-of-passage crisis, the poet goes on to comment on the actual implementation of the rhetorical move he has recommended, especially for himself.

Two things are taking place here. One is that the writer is trying out the performance space he has created, testing the viability of the rhetoric shifts it contains. Second, we are witnessing a bifurcation of the poet: the *otaman* being addressed throughout this section corresponds to the shaman in him, and the first person narrator is Shevchenko the ordinary man, an artist perhaps, but nevertheless an instantiation of the mid-nineteenth century Ukrainian who has to palliate his sociocultural predicament. (While the fit with Grabowicz's adjusted and non-adjusted selves is not perfect, there does exist evidence of a divided self-perception. A clearer duality in this passage derives from imperfectly reconciled personal and collective obligations.)

Shevchenko's seemingly monologic address to his inner shaman-figure, the father-*otaman*, in fact displays some features of a dialogue. He begins by speaking directly to the personage who likely best represents the sought-after state, and asking if the first half of the poem has validity.

> Чи так, батьку отамане?
> Чи правду співаю?
> Ех, якби-то!.. Та що й казать?
> Кебети не маю.
> А до того—Московщина,

Кругом чужі люде...
(lines 57-62)

The question is to some degree an affectation, however, because he has already placed his discourse into a privileged, shamanically tagged category in line 58 by referring to it as "singing." Too, he is speaking to himself, albeit to an alternate facet of his identity. Line 59 offers an enigmatic reply (the unfinished "if only!.." and the equally cryptic "What can I say?" allude to something obviously crucial without stating what it is) to a *different* question: not "Is this the truth?" but "Can I deliver a performance of the truth?" Shevchenko clearly presumes a positive reply to his stated question, but then unexpectedly denies what he has just granted, and indeed appears to repudiate what he has been doing for the poem's first 56 lines. He disqualifies himself on the grounds of not having "кебети," a word conveying the idea of intelligence expressing itself as ability, and one taken from a much lower lexical register than the surrounding text. This denying voice of line 60 with its markedly coarser word choice is that of the poet's "Ukrainian peasant" self. Perhaps not finding this first disavowal of competence to be enough, it adds being intimidated or discomfited by Muscovy (line 61) and the fact of being surrounded by "чужі люде" (line 62)—exactly the "wrong kind of people" whose misaligned spirit it is the shaman's job to correct.

Line 63 ("Do not give in") provides the only instance of direct speech from the "other" self in the poem. Shevchenko's text constructs this persona very like the shaman-figure whose spirit it attempts to invoke, the missing leader mentioned in line 4. And the faux "I'm-just-a-peasant" self submits a ready response: even if he performed his truth-song, it would be laughed at (lines 65 and 67).

> «Не потурай»,—може, скажеш,
> Та що з того буде?
> Насміються на псалом той,
> Що виллю сльозами;
> Насміються... Тяжко, батьку,
> Жити з ворогами!
> (lines 63-68)

Now the proposed speech act has become a psalm (line 65), a sacred song "poured out through tears" (line 66). First he said he was unable to do it; then the people around him were the problem, which subverts the ineptitude argument, since the second point would be moot if he were truly incompetent; then the obstacle becomes being laughed at, again undermining the first two objections by implying that he can in fact conceive of producing something for them to ridicule; and finally, in spite of all the demurrals, he has at some level composed nothing less than a psalm.

This cascade of deconstructions serves to promote the poet's commoner self to a self that utters divine words — a function usually reserved for someone at the level of a prophet. Having described the linguistic performance space for inscribing the older, subjugated "knowledge" reinterpreted in lines 44 to 56, Shevchenko proceeds to shamanize himself into the role of one who will resurrect, following his own formula, that displaced discourse. To do this, he needs to *become* "the one who headed up everything" (line 4), to be able to speak with that kind of voice, and hence the dialogue with the *otaman* within in an attempt to harmonize that character's speaking mode with the poet's own.

Interestingly, he does not entirely succeed. Even after having managed to position himself as an inspired revelator in the midst of protesting his inadequacy to the task, he devotes the poem's remaining 36 lines, a full third of the work, to keeping himself effectively separate from the very discursive mode he keeps insisting is so badly needed. His main contention invokes his lack of strength and authority (lines 70 and 77-79), precisely the qualities of the Ukrainian persona described in the liminal phase's text (here lines 37-41); Shevchenko is identifying strictly and personally with the exact disempowered condition which he feels duty-bound to rectify.

Поборовся б і я, може,
70 Якби малось сили;
Заспівав би—був голосок,
Та позички з'їли.
Отаке-то лихо тяжке,

Батьку ти мій, друже!
Блужу в снігах та сам собі:
«Ой не шуми, луже!»
Не втну більше. А ти, батьку,
Як сам, здоров, знаєш,
Тебе люде поважають,
Добрий голос маєш;
(lines 69-80)

Lines 69-72 equate his impotence with voicelessness, which loss of voice in turn follows from repeatedly "lending" something, perhaps an allusion to exhaustion precipitated by too many underappreciated literary efforts. In any event, he continues to devalue his talent for literary craft. Wandering "in the snow," i.e. isolated from normal life, a folk song[33] sung only to himself

---

[33] Shevchenko could count on his 19th century reader to expand this bit of intertextuality into a fuller text. The first verse of the folk song is as follows:

Ой не шуми, луже,
Зелений байраче.
Не плач, не журися,
Молодий козаче.

Thematically, this lyric belongs with lucidly shamanic compositions like "Dumka" ("Teche voda v synie more..."). It is a crucial aspect of Shevchenko's artistic adeptness to adapt folk idioms like the above for inclusion into shamanically operative verse. A second use of this same intertextuality would be in the poet's own "Tarasova nich":

Як ховали козаченька
В зеленім байраці.
Грає кобзар, виспівує,
Аж лихо сміється...
(lines 11-14)

This thoroughly shamanic poem, which has much in common with "Do Osnov"ianenka," is examined briefly at the end of the present as the limit of his capacity (lines 76-78) — all this further designates these words as the voice of Shevchenko the serf-identified, the one who needs succor from the father-*otaman* and the power-restoring knowledge carried in the shaman's song. The father-figure, by contrast, commands people's respect by virtue of having a "good voice" (the connection of line 79 with line 80 is almost certainly causal), suggesting that this might be Shevchenko's high-society St. Petersburg self.

The remainder of the poem divides evenly into two sections of twelve lines each. Each section begins with an exhortation to the *otaman* to sing, in both cases addressing him as a bird (lines 81 and 93).[34] The first section consists of several fairly detailed instructions from the poet to his spirit-bard concerning what to say and to what effect. He recapitulates the Sich and burial mounds motifs from the poem's early lines, building from them "the object of wonder" (line 85) that has been lost. Singing of these things, he avers in line 87, will overcome the resistance

---

chapter.

[34] By now it should not be necessary to continue pointing out that these references to birds are not accidentally placed images from folklore or other sources of stock phrases. Here, for example, it must be noted that the *otaman* takes the form of a spirit-familiar bird precisely at those moments when he is being called upon to perform in a shamanic capacity. Furthermore, neither the dove of line 81 nor the eagle of line 93 are birds that actually sing, which gives additional weight to the notion that these epithets may not be innocently avian.

("нехотя") to the perception ("почули," line 88) of the state indicated by *слава*.

> Співай же їм, мій голубе,
> Про Січ, про могили,
> Коли яку насипали,
> Кого положили.
> Про старину, про те диво,
> Що було, минуло...
> Утни, батьку, щоб нехотя
> На весь світ почули,
> Що діялось в Україні,
> За що погибала,
> За що слава козацькая
> На всім світі стала!
>
> (lines 81-92)

As in the earlier passage where Shevchenko claims to be unable to do the very thing he is in the act of doing, these lines betray what they profess on the surface in at least two ways. By counselling his shaman-bard to the extent that he does, the writer actually asserts an authoritative preeminence over this supposed "leader." He clearly *possesses the knowledge* of everything that needs to be said; he even explains the mechanism by which the discourse will function and what its effects will be. Secondly, this is the author of the *Kobzar* speaking. He has *not* lost his voice, in fact quite the opposite. In enjoining an "other" to speak on his behalf, Shevchenko actually addresses an alter ego with the purpose of defining/constructing it, investing it with authority while reserving the option to disclaim anything it may say.

The second set of 12 lines, the final ones in the poem, turn to commentary concerning the effects of the shamanizing utterances on the narrator, Shevchenko in his affected peasant persona. Here too the choice of words belies an outwardly subordinate stance. All of the consequences of the *otaman's* song will be shamanic for Shevchenko the listener: he will weep (line 94: in shamanic mode, write poetry), hear the "playing sea" (line 98), his "heart will smile while abiding in a foreign place" (lines 101-102);[35] all of these are the defining abilities of a shaman. More importantly, he will do these things "again"; the expression "ще раз" comes up three times in these dozen lines. Hence he has done it all before. He has shamanic powers himself, even to demand recitals from other shamans.

Утни, батьку, орле сизий!
Нехай я заплачу,
Нехай свою Україну
Я ще раз побачу,
Нехай ще раз послухаю,
Як те море грає,
Як дівчина під вербою
Гриця заспіває.
Нехай ще раз усміхнеться
Серце на чужині,
Поки ляже в чужу землю
В чужій домовині.
(lines 93-104)

---

[35] The poem's closing words concerning a coffin are of course entirely symbolic, referring to the state of spiritual death rather than to a physical demise—much as in "Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo..." and elsewhere.

Thus Shevchenko has arranged to have it both ways. He gets to exercise two voices at the same time: one fully empowered and transcendent, able to conjure key states of consciousness and the links among them, the other specifically if unconvincingly disowning any such facility. Regardless of which mode dominates during the course of the text's reception, the result remains clear: he does *not* succeed in actually laying full claim to the shamanic force of his words, preferring instead to keep a distinct part of himself separate, protesting and declining, right to the end of the piece. So while the work displays strong shamanic qualities throughout, it does not bring to realization the full capacity of its primary mode. In "Do Osnov"ianenka" as well as in a number of other poems not examined here Shevchenko seems to stop deliberately short of total identification with his rhetorically shifted state. At such moments the shamanic mode, while perhaps sustained, appears unwilling to find a closure and thus to affirm the absolute correctness of the very function it is performing.

The above lengthy analysis of a single title from the *Kobzar* has been given in detail because it presents a textbook case of the dynamics of rhetorical healing. But besides affording a lucid case study, "Do Osnov"ianenka" may be seen as an interesting example of how such therapeutic re-authoring might continue to operate beyond the immediate text. Although there will be no attempt to follow through on the observation at this time, it should be noted that parts of the Ukrainian national anthem's lyrics consist mainly of the same shamanic markers as form the reincorporation section in lines 42-56 above. Considering only the first two lines of the anthem,

> Ще не вмерла Україна,
> І слава, і воля

reveals a strong parallelism in terms of line structure, use of a common verb and substantives, and implied audience (e.g. both texts address "the people" and are written in the first person plural) with lines 49-52:

> Наша дума, наша пісня
> Не вмре, не загине...
> От де, люде, наша слава,
> Слава України!

Even the words "наша пісня" in line 49 has resonance with the fact that the national anthem is by definition "our song." More than a few other ideas, phrasings, and individual key words are common to "Ще не вмерла Україна" and the pertinent fifteen-line segment of "Do Osnov"ianenka."[36] In any event, the relationship of the two texts is not theoretical only. Such was the associative cohesion between contemporary national identity formation and Shevchenko's cultural re-storying formulations that a contemporary issue of *Meta*, a L'viv periodical, felt confident in informing its readers that Shevchenko was the author of "Ще не вмерла Україна."[37] The misconception that Shevchenko wrote the Ukrainian national anthem continues to enjoy some currency even today.

---

[36] It would be possible to argue that the Ukrainian national anthem functions as a shamanic text throughout, at least to the degree that it transparently recapitulates the reincorporation phase of the transition model as it is given expression in "Do Osnov"ianenka" and a number of other locations throughout Shevchenko's verse. For the moment, however, it is more important to understand that the lyric explicitly crafted to embody national aspirations, self-perception, and identity (for example, the anthem concludes with words affirming — "покажем" — Cossack

Although several other poems share in the same textual mechanics as "Do Osnov"ianenka," not all do so to the same degree. As already noted, closure of the discursive relocations at issue seldom feels complete. Shevchenko seems to need a rhetorical distance between himself as a constructed Ukrainian identity and the shamanic re-authoring of exactly this self-perception even while engaging in performing it; certainly he sometimes goes to considerable lengths to maintain such. Also, the transition model which "Do Osnov"ianenka" exemplifies so well often appears only very briefly or as fragments, so that its operative force must be

---

lineage, which mimics how *слава* "розкаже...чиї ми діти" in the present poem) takes its lexical and formal features not just from the poetic idiom of Shevchenko, but specifically from the shamanically associated topoi of that idiom.

[37] *Meta*, December 1863 (No. 4) p. 271. A year later the same periodical reported on the first public performance of the work, with music by M. Verbyts'kyj and lyrics correctly ascribed to Pavlo Chubyns'kyj.

collected mainly through intertextuality — allusions to other poems by Shevchenko.

Some pieces, however, articulate narrative-therapeutic shifts quite directly. One such, the 1840 "N. Markevychu," follows a functionality closely related to that of "Do Osnov"ianenka," and so will be considered only in a summary way.

Unlike the main work discussed in this chapter, "N. Markevychu" addresses itself more to ministering to the poet's own difficulties with phase transitions than to those of his people in general, but otherwise the modality remains thoroughly shamanic. The poem opens with an immediate appeal to the shamanic self to perform the trance-journey on the writer's behalf, followed right away by a claim that he would do it himself if he could. (In the previously examined work this voice began only from the poem's middle.)

> Вандуристе, орле сизий,
> Добре тобі, брате,
> Маєш крила, маєш силу,
> Є коли літати.
> Тепер летиш в Україну,
> Тебе виглядають.
> Полетів би за тобою,
> Та хто привітає?
> (lines 1-8)

Flying is mentioned directly or indirectly five times in these eight lines, the destination is Ukraine, and the addressee is called a "bandurist," i.e. a *kobzar*, Shevchenko's unmediated shaman-figure. Line 6 privileges the shaman's speech the same way line 79 did in "Do Osnov"ianenka" (there "Тебе люде поважають," here "Тебе виглядають"), and lines 7-8 devalue the authorial self's own just as was also done earlier. Lines 9 to 14 approximate the liminal phase — the order of the phases will not be sequential here — by portraying the poet's personal distress in response to dislocation and alienation.

> Я й тут чужий, одинокий,
> І на Україні
> Я сирота, мій голубе,
> Як і на чужині.
>
> (lines 9-12)

He says that his psychic isolation ("orphan" is the key word, line 11) remains constant regardless of being in Ukraine or not, but the claim does not ring true. When he begins to expand upon the specifics of this "Ukraine" from line 15 on, it is not the (more literally) geographical Ukraine, not likely the Ukraine of line 10 — rather the inner state he associates with poetic creativity of a certain kind. He evokes no people or places or events (even though he has just finished complaining that he does not have the right kind of people around him), only the now-standard tableau of nebulous wind-swept plains, wordlessly conversing winds, the near-mandatory play-speak of the "blue sea" (lines 20-21).

> А степи широкі!
> Там повіє буйнесенький,
> Як брат заговорить,

Там в широкім полі воля,
Там синєє море
Виграває, хвалить бога,
Тугу розганяє,
(lines 16-22)

Passages of this kind deliver a fairly full complement of the verbal markers of Shevchenko's literary shamanism. In the present case, lines 15 to 22 also correspond to a reincorporation phase. Certainly the last line of this section mentions successful "dispelling of grief" as an explicit function of the playing blue sea. He also finds "freedom" by locating himself in the steppe (line 19) and also a semblance of family relationship in line 18. Overall, however, this is not strictly arrival at a new status but only a description of the means to do so. Shevchenko conducts a cogitation on the *difficulty* of shamanizing more than an actual re-authoring of an inappropriate identity narrative.[30] Besides, the initial separation phase to which the poem would normally have been a response does not appear until the end, and even then consists of only two lines (27-28).

Там могили з буйним вітром
В степу розмовляють,
Розмовляють, сумуючи,
Отака їх мова:

---

[30] Although in an oddly self-referential way Shevchenko does re-story his identity narrative *as a shaman*, at least to the extent of trying to deny that faculty in himself. There is nothing therapeutic or inherently shamanic about this activity, however, only a continued insistence (possibly contrived) on keeping separate two generative facets of one poetic voice.

«Було колись — минулося,
Не вернеться знову».
(lines 23-28)

This passage makes only oblique reference to the Cossack past in that it mentions burial mounds (line 23); otherwise the "було колись — минулося" points to a generalized loss of propitious linguistic space (lines 24-26 contain three references to spoken language).

Shevchenko closes the poem by suggesting that while the loss can be recouped, he will not be the one to do it — regardless of the fact that he *has* just given a performance of exactly such shamanic flight, including reporting on the precise words of the symbolic entities he encountered in the journey. His excuse hinges on the claim that *доля* has "clipped his wings" (line 31)[39] by placing him among people "foreign" to his sensibilities and perceptual patterns.

Полетів би, послухав би,
Заплакав би з ними.
Та ба, доля приборкала
Меж людьми чужими.
(lines 29-32)

Repeated instances of professed inability or unwillingness to engage in shamanic verbalization, when found immediately alongside texts openly executing just that function, might lead to an image of the poet as a shaman manqué. After all, much of the substance of works like "N. Markevychu" and "Do Osnov"ianenka" consists of submissions of writerly impuissance and literary self-deprecation, even though the very existence—to say nothing of the shamanic features—of the poem would seem to negate such a possibility. Much more likely, however, is the probability that Shevchenko continues to simulate (or simply indulge in) unreconciled dialogic impulses because a) it serves a model for the shifting, uncompleted transitions of Ukrainian self-perception, and b) what he wants to say can be so readily generated from the tension between the two voices. He proclaims his ineptitude for poetically-mediated rhetorical shifts precisely so that he can go on making them in the name of an effort to correct the stated insufficiency.

---

[39] In Shevchenko's time this would certainly have been the meaning of "приборкала," rather than the more modern denotation of taming or controlling. See for example Borys Hrinchenko, *Slovar' ukrains'koi movy* tom III (Kyiv, 1909) p. 407.

Traditional scholarship finds the above two poems significant because they introduce the theme of writing and literary community as such into Ukrainian literature (similarly, "Na vichnu pam"iat' Kotliarevs'komy" would be included here). No doubt the dedicatory titles have functionality at this level. However, apart from a few lines towards the middle of the third mentioned poem, the named addressee does not personally participate in the text itself; instead there is a broad appeal to a *generalized* poetic power to perform specific tasks, tasks which Shevchenko actually intends to realize himself.

A number of works in Shevchenko's poetic production wholly or in part effect language-mediated cognitive shifts aimed at providing empowering narratives. Most often, these involve linguistic repossessions of the Cossack past — not the factology of history, but an alternate and probably older way of perceiving and speaking about lived experience. Taken together with a good working knowledge of mode-shift markers, an understanding of these excursions into the re-authoring of stories reveals the systemics of Shevchenko's literary shamanism. The next chapter furnishes some additional case studies manifesting this same modality.

Chapter Six

SOME CASE STUDIES

> "[The study of shamanism] might elucidate the process whereby cultural icons have been formed and are still being formed."
>
> —*Gloria Flaherty*

While not every poem Shevchenko wrote functions from within the shamanic mode, there appears to be a positive correlation between the degree to which a given text exhibits the above-described rhetorical-shifting properties and the veneration it has been traditionally accorded. Without engaging the question of how one would measure adulation, it remains true that notwithstanding Shevchenko's unequalled renown and overall prodigious role in shaping Ukrainian culture past and present, a significant number of his poetic works are simply not known to his readers. The same culture's members who have the words to "The Testament" memorized (and sing it as a kind of unofficial anthem at Ukrainian public gatherings) would almost certainly be unable to recognize, say, the short poem "Barvinok tsviv i zeleniv..." as being by the same author.[1] The extraordinary effect of Shevchenko's verse emerges from only a limited subset of the canon—something not generally acknowledged or viewed as particularly significant. Yet this subset holds the highest concentration of the shamanic markers identified here. A detailed analysis of a few such passages (for Shevchenko is received in terms of the episode more than he is through the poem-as-a-whole) enhances the case for reading him from a shamanically oriented position, and should provide additional insights into the textual mechanisms already examined.

---

[1] This particular text will be examined at the end of this chapter as an example of how despite the presence of some suggestive surface features, the shamanic mode does *not* apply.

The early poem "Perebendia," one that contains a number of transparently shamanic qualities, represents one of the clearest instances of the poet's self-portrayal.[2] Although the populist version of Shevchenko presented him as a man of the common people (a view that begins with Kulish), here he is seen as strongly distanced from the rest of society even as he interacts closely with it. A sharp sense of duality arises as the poem unfolds; in fact, the increasingly detailed elaboration of this divide in the artist's role and (self-)perception constitutes the main thematic impulse of "Perebendia."

Shevchenko's strategy involves introducing the titular character as a fairly commonplace figure, if a bit odd, and then gradually defamiliarizing him until he becomes someone almost not of this world, certainly marginalized and displaced by his own community. A deliberate irony starts being set up as early as the first two lines, portraying Perebendia (even the name is vaguely comical) as old and blind, and hence harmless, and "known to everyone" (line 2, repeated in line 5); certainly nothing remarkable or mysterious about this fellow.

---

[2] In the changes he made for the Chyhyryn *Kobzar* of 1844, Shevchenko altered the title of this poem to "Кобзарь." The meaning of the word *перебендя* itself is given as "балакуча людина, вередун," which latter term denotes a person who constantly changes the topic or manner of his discourse and is therefore difficult to understand. It is this *changeability* that is being underscored: the minstrel is one thing for people, another for himself.

> Перебендя старий, сліпий —
> Хто його не знає?
> Він усюди вештається
> Та на кобзі грає.
> А хто грає, того знають
> І дякують люде;
> Він їм тугу розганяє,
> Хоть сам світом нудить.
> (lines 1-8)

His comings and goings are dismissed through the low-register word "вештається," which carries a meaning somewhere between "hanging out" and "wandering around pointlessly," and the unspecified "everywhere" of line 3. Line 4 reduces his existence to a neutral function: he simply "plays the *kobza*" (an earlier, less developed version of the bandura).

The unproblematic, even inconsequential character depicted in the first four lines does interact with others, however, at least to the extent that "people are thankful" for his playing (line 6). And the first hint that Perebendia may not be totally uncomplicated comes with the revelation that although he cheers people up (line 7), his own lot in life is not a happy one (line 8). The next dozen lines provide the particulars of his "world-weary" existence and his response to it:

> Попідтинню сіромаха
> І днює й ночує;
> Нема йому в світі хати,
> Недоля жартує
> Над старою головою,
> А йому байдуже!..
> Сяде собі, заспіває:
> «Ой не шуми, луже!»
> Заспіває та й згадає,
> Що він сиротина,
> Пожуриться, посумує,
> Сидячи під тином.
>
> (lines 9-20)

Shamanic elements begin to appear at this point. Both the first and last lines of the above segment mention that he spends a lot of time by the "тин," the wattle fence that represents the boundary between the "weed"-state and the "хата"-state (compare the note on the final lines of "Maria," page 104, and the discussion on pp. 105-106). Not having his own "хата" (line 11) repeats the motif found in poems dealing with Shevchenko's shamanic self-awareness, for example line 26 ("Нема в мене хати!") of "Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo..." or the whole short piece "L." ("Postavliu khatu i kimnatu...").[3] "Song" and memory are linked in line 17. The significance of the folk song "Ой не шуми, луже!" has already been mentioned in note 33 to chapter five.

---

[3] This remarkable text, considered further beginning on page 201, deals with the poet's sense of shamanic transition into communitas. It provides, among others, one more excellent example of a textual marker of trance-journey mode: its final line reads "Запалиш рай мій самотний"—exactly the transition into shamanic

The next twenty lines, not reproduced here (21-40, set off typographically), enumerate the categories of people with whom Perebendia interacts in an orphic capacity. All of society turns out to be included, but he sings to each type of person separately, on different topics, and for every such instance in a different physical setting. His domain encompasses everyone, and his function is to provide a range of verbal instruction, from folk songs to history and the Bible, dispensing a communal narrative *balanced* between laughter and tears. Shevchenko's harmless old *kobza*-player extends his authority to memory and social function, and (this above all) to the relations between those functions and the parts of the story they will be targeted to receive. He is, in short, depicted as the keeper of the narrative order.

Then everything changes starting at line 41. Solitude replaces the social situation, even to the point of obscuring identity: called by his name up to this point, Perebendia now becomes abstracted, spoken of as just "the *kobzar*"—a force more than person. His communion too shifts from people to elemental forces, prominent among which are the wind, burial mounds, the

---

initiation-trauma described in line 19 ("I рай запалило") of "N.N." (However, see page 203).

steppe "like the wide blue sea" — all indicators of shamanic composition. (These elements correspond remarkably faithfully to a "traditional" shaman's practices. For example, shamans regularly go on retreats into the mountains for purposes of restoring the integrity of their *own* internal cohesion.[4] Mountains in this usage can be literal, or figurative in the sense of places to be alone; but if they are actual mountains, the recluse will indeed sit on a summit, either to maximize seclusion or as a symbol of being closer to Heaven. The steppe's closest equivalent of a mountain would be the burial mound, and appropriately enough Shevchenko's blind singer places himself at the top of one.)

Вітер віє-повіває,
По полю гуляє.
На могилі кобзар сидить
Та на кобзі грає.
Кругом його степ, як море
Широке, синіє:

---

[4] The literature on the relationship between mountains (and especially their peaks) and shamanism is considerable. Eliade, for instance, repeatedly lists mountains among "the shaman's sources of power," as on pp. 90 and 106. One case particularly pertinent to images like the one dominating the second half of "Perebendia" is described in Appendix 1 of John Matthews *The Celtic Shaman: A Handbook* (Rockport MA, 1992). At issue are the formations known as "long barrows": "[F]or many years referred to as burial mounds, these have, in more recent times, been recognized as ritual places.... [W]ithin the confines of such a space...the shaman would have been able to act out his or her role as mediator between the worlds and the sacred powers of the wheel" (p. 180). Matthews goes on to give details concerning how each such mound was constructed so as to represent the *axis mundi*, the central mountain of the world, or the pillars that hold up the sky, depending on local interpretation.

За могилою могила,
А там—тільки мріє.

(lines 41-48)

Here some of the elements characterizing a "holy fool," who while isolated from his social milieu also acts as the carrier of its deeper truths and the gateway to them, are summarily set out. It is clear that the power to discharge these responsibilities, the influence with which his poetry is laden, comes from the actively sought isolation—both the literal seclusion of the steppe and the inner distance between the *kobzar* and life of ordinary people. He not only speaks with nature, but also subordinates its voice to his, so that even the wind dies down to listen to him (lines 50-52).

Сивий ус, стару чуприну
Вітер розвіває;
То приляже та послуха,
Як кобзар співає,
Як серце сміється, сліпі очі плачуть...
Послуха, повіє...
Старий заховавсь
В степу на могилі, щоб ніхто не бачив,
Щоб вітер по полю слова розмахав,
Щоб люде не чули, бо то боже слово,
То серце по волі з богом розмовля,
То серце щебече господнюю славу,
А думка край світа на хмарі гуля.

(lines 49-61)

The better to conduct his shamanizing sessions, the old bard sets apart a consecrated space (lines 55-56), and uses it to enter a spirit-journey through which he will obtain what will eventually be passed on to his people. Significantly, it is essential that these very people, who will shortly receive what he learns, *not* hear the original dialogue (line 58); it is in another language, a "divine discourse"[5] which the shaman translates into forms more appropriate for them.

Manifest shamanic images begin to appear with increased density once the trance-journey itself is broached in line 61. Clouds, the mandatory eagle-familiar, the "boundary between worlds," and psychic flight occur in the space of only two lines. Shevchenko seems to have a direct grasp of the shaman's technique: he signals a knowledge of the operational split by assigning the symbolic tasks to the *emotional* aspect ("the heart" performs the language function in lines 59 and 60), and the cognitive ones to the *mental* aspect ("думка" commences the trance-journey in line 61).

Орлом сизокрилим літає, ширяє,
Аж небо блакитне широкими б'є;
Спочине на сонці, його запитає,
Де воно ночує, як воно встає;
Послухає моря, що воно говорить,
Спита чорну гору: «Чого ти німа?»
І знову на небо, бо на землі горе,
Бо на їй, широкій, куточка нема
Тому, хто все знає, тому, хто все чує:
Що море говорить, де сонце ночує —
Його на сім світі ніхто не прийма;
Один він між ними, як сонце високе,

---

[5] The "боже слово" of line 58 is not likely the word of a theological God, but rather the articulated expression of sacred agency. The same thing holds true for the use of the "God"-word in the next two lines as well.

Його знають люде, бо носить земля;
А якби почули, що він, одинокий,
Співа на могилі, з морем розмовля,—
На божеє слово вони б насміялись,
Дурним би назвали, од себе б прогнали.
Нехай понад морем, сказали б, гуля!
(lines 62-79)

The power infusing the old man grows until it includes not just human concerns but the entire world, from the heights of the heavens to the depths of the sea (lines 64-66). *Knowledge* is what he seeks to obtain from the sun and the sea, measures not only of high and low but also of time and distance (space). Knowledge of a different kind betokens the culmination of his shamanic task: he is able to access collective memory through direct petition of the burial mounds which literally contain the past itself (line 67).[6]

---

[6] The "black mountain" in this line refers to the burial mound on which the bard is sitting. Being able to put questions to this symbolic and literal repository of the past is, of course, powerfully and perhaps uniquely shamanic, but may be slightly oblique in "Perebendia." In other poems, notably *Hajdamaky*, the ability not just to access history but to consult directly with those who made it expands into a major topos.

Заспіваю—розвернулась
Висока могила,
Аж до моря запорожці
Степ широкий вкрили.
(*Hajdamaky*, lines 113-116)

Виступають отамани,
Сотники з панами
І гетьмани—всі в золоті,
У мою хатину
Прийшли, сіли коло мене
І про Україну
Розмовляють, розказують,

And precisely through these activities he sets himself apart from the rest of humanity, for what he comes to know and perceive (line 70: "тому, хто все чує") is not understandable "in this world" (line 72)—because "there is calamity on earth" (line 68). People cannot recognize and do not accept the material and ideas he is proposing, especially not from the source he consults. So the poet's real responsibility lies in reshaping the knowledge into a version more appropriate for the given circumstances and audience, all the while concealing the process whereby he comes by it. It is not so much that the world rejects his rendering of "God's word"; the act of entering the shamanic state itself inspires derision, scorn, and ultimately alienation (lines 75-79). A unified discourse amounts to a private language; supreme power entails supreme loneliness.

The poem closes with an authorial address to the minstrel similar in tone (and in wording: see for example line 29—quoted on page 155—of the latter work) to parts of "Do Osnov"ianenka." Being in a position to approve of and advise his shaman-figure imbues Shevchenko-the-poet with an authority greater still. The

---

Як Січ будовали,
(*Hajdamaky*, lines 131-138)

More than 150 following lines (up to the "Introduktsia") are in the shamanic mode, including straightforward detailing of the process by which lost knowledge available only to the shaman-poet is brought to his fellow Ukrainians.

suggestion for solving the problem of rejection by the masses is a direct one: play along with them (lines 89-91). These lines, effectively the final ones of the poem (lines 92-95 simply imitate the refrain of lines 21-22 and 37-40) may be seen as Shevchenko's own resolution of the divide between the poetic and "ordinary" spheres of his personal life. They follow from the fundamental sanction he gives to the shamanic activity in lines 80-87.

Добре єси, мій кобзарю,
Добре, батьку, робиш,
Що співати, розмовляти
На могилу ходиш!
Ходи собі, мій голубе,
Поки не заснуло
Твоє серце, та виспівуй,
Щоб люде не чули.
А щоб тебе не цурались,
Потурай їм, брате!
Скачи, враже, як пан каже:
На те він багатий.
(lines 80-91)

Although these lines represent Shevchenko's early poetry, an awareness of his duality was already taking shape.[7] But in expressing those very realizations, "Perebendia" concerns itself with a being who functions as a tribal medium in a way consistent with shamanic practices: collective but perhaps obscure knowledge manifesting through private vernacular, a sense of poetic power linked to personal seclusion.

---

[7] Shevchenko does not develop his "views" or "vision" over the course of his literary career, rather they seem to spring into existence full-blown right from the earliest works. The method of *delivering* the ideas, of course, did not remain uniform.

Another poem whose considerable popularity proceeds largely from its conspicuously shamanic character, one often classified among the so-called "political" works, is "Son (Komedia)."[8] Dreams, especially dreams of flying, are archetypal in the Jungian sense for purposes of individual psychology,[9] but also carry some of this quality over into the collective case. The poem concerns itself explicitly with the two worlds the poet inhabits — in this instance directly rendered as Ukraine and St. Petersburg—and his journeys (the dream-flight) between them. Throughout the poem Shevchenko either alternates plain references to these worlds or actually moves to occupy them in alternation in marked ways.

Reference to the dichotomy comes up as early as the poem's epigraph (the beginning of John 14:17), which opposes the mundane state of being to whatever state of grace is understood by "Spirit of truth."[10] It also resonates with the ordinary world's rejection of the seer's "higher reality," as presented in "Perebendia" and elsewhere.

---

[8] Three pieces by Shevchenko bear the title "The Dream," but this one is by far the best known. The other two are not examined here, so "Son" will always refer to the poem subtitled "Komedia."

[9] The Freudian interpretation of flying dreams as essentially sexual does not serve as well here as Jung's explication of libido being the energies of creativity in general. In "flying" as he does here Shevchenko makes contact with these deep energies within himself.

[10] The second half of the verse, not quoted by Shevchenko, spells out the connection between them: "...but ye shall know him, for he dwelleth in you, and shall be in you." In some measure, "Son"

Much as in "Perebendia," the introductory thirty or so lines of "Son" comprise an enumeration of what different people are targeted to obtain, in this case from their *доля*. The first dozen lines provide a typical example of the style and content.[11]

У всякого своя доля
І свій шлях широкий,
Той мурує, той руйнує,
Той неситим оком —
За край світа зазирає,
Чи нема країни,
Щоб загарбать і з собою
Взять у домовину.
Той тузами обирає
Свата в його хаті,
А той нишком у куточку
Гострить ніж на брата.

These reflections make up more than a catalogue of human iniquity; they are a list of the specific failings and difficulties that characterized, at least within the figurative parameters of poetic expression, the plight of Ukrainians at the time Shevchenko was writing. The passage speaks about something similar to the separation phase, since it distinctly describes dislocation of fixed social relationships — Shevchenko mostly tabulates the

---

furnishes an amplification of this notion.

[11] This broadly ironic opening section loosely imitates the structure of H. Skovoroda's ninth song in *The Garden of Divine Songs*.

familial ones—and the disintegration of conventional roles (e.g, lines 9-10 and 12).

Then, having apprised his countrymen of their powerlessness through these initial examples, the poet decries their defeatism (line 30) and castigates them for placing their hopes for improvement in an afterlife (lines 34-37).

> А братія мовчить собі,
> Витріщивши очі!
> Як ягнята; нехай, каже,
> Може, так і треба.
> Так і треба! бо немає
> Господа на небі!
> А ви в ярмі падаєте
> Та якогось раю
> На тім світі благаєте?
> Немає! немає!
> Шкода й праці. Схаменіться.
> (lines 27-37)

The answer to their woes, he maintains, lies in the hierarchical leveling born of communitas (lines 38-40)—although he is quick to distance himself from both the exploiters and the exploited in the half-dozen lines immediately following.

> Усі на сім світі—
> І царята, і старчата—
> Адамові діти.
> І той.... і той... А що ж то я?
> Ось що, добрі люди:
> Я гуляю, бенкетую
> В неділю і в будень.
> А вам нудно! жалкуєте!
> Єй-богу, не чую.
> І не кричіть! Я свою п'ю,
> А не кров людськую!
> (lines 38-48)

Shevchenko spent most of his life between the "царята" and the "старчата" (line 39), and in trying to reconcile these two worlds (at least within himself) functioned as an intermediary between them. The shift that occurs in the middle of line 41 beginning with "А що ж то я?" again raises the question of his relationship to the people who exhibit alternating (or even simultaneous) helplessness and the predatory behavior he has just finished addressing. He re-affirms his essential separateness from them, just as in "Perebendia," and notes that the standard human boundaries, such as the one between a holy day and a regular day (line 44), don't apply to him. Neither do the categories he has listed above: he is neither predator nor prey (lines 47-48).[12]

At the outset of the dream story proper, starting with line 49, the poet gives several clues that he will be speaking from an altered, not-belonging state. "Попідтинню" alludes to homelessness as well as to shamanic activity; he is drunk; he is on his way to his "хатина," a word which in Shevchenko's use does not mean his domicile but rather identifies strongly with both communitas and the poet's own inner state of return to this condition. And in fact the lines immediately following the use of this word in line 52 describe exactly such a set of circumstances:

---

[12] Also like Perebendia, he uses "people" (люди) as an interface between the public and private spheres within himself. Lines 42-44 give the outer picture of a man whose life is festive and celebratory, followed immediately by a much more somber image, that of the poet "drinking his own blood" (lines 47-48) —although blood as such is not explicitly mentioned, and the reference can just as readily be to drinking alcohol. A transition between these two states is often found described at the beginning of poems (such as "Son") whose primary mode will be shamanic.

> Отак, ідучи попідтинню
> З бенкету п'яний уночі,
> Я міркував собі йдучи,
> Поки доплентавсь до хатини.
> А в мене діти не кричать
> І жінка не лає,
> Тихо, як у раї,
> Усюди божа благодать —
> І в серці, і в хаті.
>
> (lines 49-57)

(The last line quoted above is also significant in that it confirms once more the identification of the *xama*-communitas state with a specific inner configuration.)

That Shevchenko should take the next ten lines to say that he is going to sleep signifies more than an emphasis on a device commonly used to mitigate the repercussions of publishing politically controversial poetry. It also discloses at least a rudimentary awareness of a shaman-like process, the dream-journey to another world. The first line actually recounting the dream experience (line 68: "Дивлюся: так буцім сова") even has the standard tribal shaman's familiar spirit appearing in the form of an owl. Immediately following this come six lines describing the flying itself — again, exactly the typical shamanic sequence —

after which Shevchenko inserts 20 lines of direct speech[13] spelling out the nature of what he is doing.

Прощай, світе, прощай, земле,
Неприязний краю,
Мої муки, мої люті
В хмарі заховаю.
А ти, моя Україно,
Безталанна вдово,
Я до тебе літатиму
З хмари на розмову.
На розмову тихо-сумну,
На раду з тобою;
Опівночі падатиму
Рясною росою.
Порадимось, посумуєм,
Поки сонце встане;
Поки твої малі діти
На ворога стануть.
Прощай же ти, моя нене,
Удово-небого,
Годуй діток; жива правда
У господа бога!

(lines 75-94)

The diction changes. Introducing an oral narrative device — paratactic build-up of rhymes echoing the tone of the *duma*[14] (itself a recapitulation of collective memory) —marks this point as the beginning of something very important. In this brief excursus Shevchenko reveals how the shamanic mechanism of his creative process molds the structure of his text. The trance-journey sequence is: 1) leave-taking of the earth; 2) going to a "cloud"; 3) going from the cloud to "Ukraine";[15] 4) holding council with Ukraine; 5) leave-taking of Ukraine. Departing the "ill-disposed land" (line 76) leaving behind its troubles to enter/become a cloud corresponds to the shaman passing into his altered state; the transformation from cloud to falling dew (equivalent to rain) may be understood as the actual visitation of another realm while in that state; conferring together is the process of imbuing oneself with the properties (in this case the sense or "wisdom" of communitas) of the other world; and the parting exhortation to "feed your children" (line 93) is a conscious affirmation of the purpose of the exercise. "Until the sun rises" (line 88) at once evokes an association with folk sorcery (cf. "At midnight" in line 85) and also refers to the eventual "enlightenment"—i.e., return to their true nature—of his countrymen through the poet's efforts. Shevchenko's transformations into or identification with clouds, rain/dew, and the sun is also powerfully elemental ("the sun" in line 88 is again a reference to the person of Shevchenko, a common way he had of alluding to himself in his function as poet; see *Hajdamaky* line 46, or line 74 in "Perebendia" for instances of this usage).

---

[13] Almost all editions of the *Kobzar* put quotation marks around this section. The *Povne zibrannia tvoriv* does not.

[14] The implicit model here is not only folklore but the Bible, one of whose favorite devices is also repetition of this kind. Beyond marking a shift in diction, beyond establishing a *duma*-like sonority, Shevchenko hereby moves into the mode of *scriptural* discourse.

---

[15] The imperfective "літатиму" indicates that Shevchenko understands this to be his function and his mission: he will make this journey repeatedly — i.e., create his poetry — until "your little children / rise against the foe" (lines 89-90). But it has been shown that "ворог" here and in other poems (most clearly in "Zapovit": "Як понесе з України / У синєє море / Кров ворожу...") is much more likely to refer to the "bad blood" found in his own countrymen; this is discussed on page 114. Here as in "Son" the image is of flying, of challenging God (lines following 149 in "Son": "Чи бог бачить із-за хмари...") and of continuing to operate in this way until Ukrainians find a way back to what they have lost.

> [...] отоді я
> І лани, і гори —
> Все покину і полину
> До самого бога
> Молитися... а до того
> Я не знаю бога.
>
> ("Zapovit," lines 11-16)

The "family" mentioned at poem's close is a reference to a re-established communitas.

"Son (Komedia)" continues for nearly another five hundred lines, but the analysis given above should be sufficient to confirm the shamanic grounding of its composition. Overall, the poet establishes his power as being equal to that of the whole collective, which here is called simply "Ukraine," by personalizing it as a woman, his mother, and becoming a spokesman for it. Actually the collective here is also collective memory and tribal history, so Shevchenko's claim to spokesman status is transgenerational—precisely as in the case of a professional shaman.

Compositions like "Perebendia" and "Son" furnish especially transparent illustrations of the shamanic modality and its attendant markers. Not coincidentally, they (along with some of the other strongly shamanic poems examined earlier) continue to serve as sources for Shevchenko's most commonly quoted lines. Additional equally obvious examples could easily be multiplied, but doing so would not likely substantially extend or elaborate on the arguments being advanced. More productive, perhaps, would be to inspect some texts where the shamanic mode is either not primary or only partially in effect — the better to understand its possibilities and limitations. A summary look at two poems mentioned earlier, written less than two weeks apart and apparently inspired by a single set of events, may yield some insights into the boundaries of shamanic reading.

"Postavliu khatu i kimnatu..."[16] begins with a textbook case of communitas portrayed through standard shamanic topoi: the *xama* (line 1),[17] the garden-paradise (line 2), the dream-children that normally symbolize his thoughts/poems (line 7). As in so much of his shamanic work, freedom and loneliness will coexist. All of it culminates in the "clear, ancient dream" (lines 9-10) — another pointer to the shaman's central trance-journey. And in the middle of this line everything suddenly shifts to negation, discord, and ruin. Here is the entire poem:

---

[16] The titular "L." of "Postavliu khatu i kimnatu..." is almost certainly Lykera Polusmakova, a woman Shevchenko courted and apparently expected to marry in 1860. By the time this poem was written the relationship had deteriorated considerably.

[17] The word "кімната" in Shevchenko's time did not mean only "a room," but referred to a part of the house specially maintained for socializing, hence meaning approximately "parlor." Thus he has in mind a space not only of familial but also communal harmony.

Поставлю хату і кімнату,
Садок-райочок насажу.
Посижу я і похожу
В своїй маленькій благодаті.
Та в одині-самотині
В садочку буду спочивати,
Присняться діточки мені,
Веселая присниться мати,
Давнє-колишній та ясний
Присниться сон мені!.. і ти!..
Ні, я не буду спочивати,
Бо й ти приснишся. І [в] малий
Райочок мій спідтиха-тиха
Підкрадешся, наробиш лиха...
Запалиш рай мій самотний.

This item is instructive because the jump that occurs in line 10 also entails a transition *out* of the shamanic modality. True, the topic being considered continues unchanged: the writer's plans for ordering his inner state. But the textual register no longer depends on any of the markers used up to this point, and the progression from "хата" to "сон" (i.e., from achieving communitas to poetic creativity or dream-journey) simply ceases being the issue —or, more exactly, can no longer be positioned in shamanic terms. The reason involves the fact that the agent of the break in line 10 (the "ти") is a specific external intrusion—not something like "structure" or "чужі люде" or even the internal conflict between Shevchenko's paired-but-opposed identities.

Which leaves the final line, an echo of line 19 in "N.N."

("Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo"). In the passage from the earlier poem, quoted on page 81, the image of "setting paradise on fire" is followed by a description of the consequences: traumatic cognitive shifts constituting shamanic sickness-crisis and leading to initiation with the help of a spirit-guide in the form of a young girl; a lifetime of literary creativity ensues. In "L." the image of Edenic conflagration literally terminates the poem. There is no initiation-crisis, no resolution, no poetry to follow. The elements appear as in "N.N.": a harmonious state, fire in paradise, a girl; but their interrelationships are not the same. In the former piece they were shamanic in their arrangement and functionality; here the final five lines are only a personal lyric.

Finally, a poem whose deep structure cannot be said to be shamanic, regardless of the presence of elements which may suggest otherwise. Written just thirteen days prior to "L.," the eight-line "Barvinok tsviv i zeleniv..." certainly may have thematic continuities with the later work — though these may not be immediately obvious.[18] Chronologically it falls between "Lykeri," written about five weeks previously, and "L."

---

[18] The dedication is to N. Ia. Makarov, an acquaintance of Shevchenko's. Makarov's sister employed Lykera Polusmakova as a domestic servant at the time.

Барвінок цвів і зеленів,
Слався, розстилався;
Та недосвіт передсвітом
В садочок укрався.

Потоптав веселі квіти,
Побив... Поморозив...
Шкода того барвіночка
Й недосвіта шкода!

At first glance, the text appears unremarkable until the final line, with its unexpected and seemingly unwarranted expression of pity for the destroying frost. One could attempt to force a shamanic reading by invoking extremely brief correspondences to the transition model. Lines 3 and 4 could thus be perceived as a separation phase, 5-6 as traumatic liminality, and 7-8 being a "new understanding" of what has transpired. However, such a reading would not be justified beyond proposing the schema. No shift in perceptual method is evident, no mention of anything like a journey or crisis indeed of any of the markers associated with Shevchenko's literary shamanism.

Instead, this poem's modality is just what it appears to be — folkloric. The key to its code is sexual, involving little beyond realizing that the periwinkle was the flower used for the crowns worn by girls during their weddings, and thus symbolized virginity. The time of the frost's arrival (before dawn, line 3) suggests the moment before the young woman would blossom into the world (also a common assignation time for village boys and girls), and lines 5-6 may well refer to a forced "deflowering" (so to speak), a loss of the girl in some sense.

The anomalous last line is what distinguishes complex poetic art from a mere folk ditty. Equal compassion or sadness for both the destroyer and the destroyed is not easy to explain, and remains a matter for speculation. Possibly the male damages himself in perpetuating violence as much as he does her; if the verse is at all autobiographical and Shevchenko was feeling betrayed, he may equally have expected her to betray the next man in her life as well, and was therefore signaling having made his peace with losing her. The text simply does not provide more guidance on the point made in its final word.

In any case, "Barvinok tsviv i zeleniv..." indicates the approximate line beyond which reading Shevchenko from a shamanic perspective ceases to be particularly useful. Possibilities for locating markers similar to those indicating a full shamanic textual functionality do not vanish: we still see in line four's "садочок" an echo of the "садочок-райочок" in lines 2 and 13 of "L." The "sneaking in/up" verbs carry over too. But the core structure no longer follows from the shamanic mechanism the way it does in the paradigmatic examples adduced earlier. Shevchenko's shamanic mode is not a binary property in that it either applies or does not, rather it can shade off into relative insignificance within any given poem. The difference between "L." and "Barvinok tsviv i zeleniv. . ." exemplifies the limit of the shamanic function without invalidating its traces within works primarily informed by other poetic modalities.

Chapter Seven

THE COMPARATIVE MOMENT

> We must close our eyes and invoke
> a new manner of seeing. —*Plotinus*

This chapter addresses some additional arguments around Shevchenko's literary shamanism, both those that further elucidate and illustrate its functionality, and those which raise possible challenges. When examined in the context of parallel (or at least ambient) literary traditions, the case for a shamanic mode can be positioned differently than when it is being made solely with reference to the texts themselves — as it has been up to this point. Further, some intriguing patterns are revealed when examples of texts composed under plausibly shamanic conditions[1] are compared directly with Shevchenko's. In order to expand upon and perhaps preemptorily defend this dissertation's chief claims, three sets of comparative issues are reviewed herewith: 1.) the extent to which Romanticism alone, as a movement and set of conventions in arts and letters, can account for the shamanic elements presented in Shevchenko; 2.) how the other Ukrainian Romantic poetry — particularly that of the Kharkiv School — of Shevchenko's time contrasts with his in the salient respects; and 3.) the significance of an extensive homology between a passage in "Hajdamaky" and a section of the *Tao Teh Ching*, an acknowledged shamanic text from 5th century B.C. China.

---

[1] Ideally, these would be texts which have been accepted by the scholarly community as shamanic. Unfortunately, no such category of writings exists. Comments on the still inchoate but currently evolving nature of this entire class of investigative methodology may be found in chapters two and three.

With respect to Romanticism as a set of literary practices and sensibilities, the relevant questions may be best addressed by placing a few of Shevchenko's unmistakably shamanic passages (as that quality stands delineated here) next to similar ones by writers positively associated with Romanticism. This study will not concern itself with whether or to what extent Shevchenko may be regarded as a "Romantic" poet;[2] rather the question will be whether what we have been calling Shevchenko's "shamanism" can be reduced to the stock ingredients of literary Romanticism widely prevailing at the time.

As a collection of values and attitudes, Romanticism (at least in Europe) manifested as a universal and trans-temporal phenomenon, but at the same time an intricate and multiplex one.[3] Commonly it is described in terms of a standard set of surface characteristics: a heightened interest in the occult, folklore, history, and the like. Deeper issues include apotheosis of self (and especially of the poet), division of the world into polar opposites, a focus on "the other" (e.g., Byronic heroes or the *poète maudit*), a predominantly metaphoric rather than metonymic style, and a strong privileging of intuition and imagination over reasoning and rules — hence an emphasis on symbols and mythical thinking. All of this applies to Shevchenko without constituting his shamanic modality. Conversely, the mode-shifting function in Shevchenko's texts does not depend on the presence of Romanticist-identified elements as such. Neither would it be correct to infer a similarity in underlying mechanism where partially coinciding outer structures are observed.

---

[2] This topic has generated a considerable body of commentary. See, for example, Lisa Efimov Schneider, "An Examination of Shevchenko's Romanticism" in *Shevchenko and the Critics* p. 430. The article examines a few of the major western European Romantic writers in this context as well.

[3] Lilian R. Furst (The Critical Idiom series, John D. Jump, ed.), *Romanticism* (London, 1969) gives beginning on p. 2 a 23-word list of "synonyms" for Romanticism, followed a long inventory of collected "definitions."

These points warrant some amplification. It is abundantly obvious that many of the "set items" of Shevchenko's thematic and imagic repertoire coincide with those contained in the general description of the Romantic Movement: emotionally intensified presentation of personal experience, association of human feelings with forces of Nature, preoccupation with the melancholic and the sentimental — among many others. Of these, a number appear to be superficially the same as the contexts in which Shevchenko's shamanic mode is being claimed to operate. Of particular note here are nostalgia for childhood or the past, a heightened interest in the irrational realms of dreams, delirium, or folk superstition, and perhaps most importantly an orientation on the newly-emerging ideas of "nation" and their rootedness in posited spiritual and linguistic attributes of various "peoples." This naturally raises questions concerning whether the parameters here identified as shamanic may simply turn out to be Romanticism renamed.

Although it should be sufficiently plain from the evidence adduced thus far that what has been called Shevchenko's shamanic mode extends well beyond the kind of literary dynamics normally explained in terms of Romantic characteristics, there would be no inconsistency in acknowledging a commonality at the surface level of, say, themes or some formal devices.[4] It is also possible that Shevchenko was not the only Romantic poet whose verse evinces a shamanic mode. But the points being elaborated here are in support of the contention that Romanticism *per se* is not equivalent to literary shamanism, and that in spite of some shared features the two phenomena are not homologous. And much of the supporting data for demonstrating these points are situated in poems exhibiting precisely such features.

---

[4] Alternatively, we have the view that a correct, up-to-date definition of Romanticism inherently embraces the primacy of mystical and visionary cognition, and naturally expresses itself in literarily vatic terms. Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* revised and enlarged edition (Cornell University Press, 1971), propounds such a position: "But the Romantic assertion is not just an assertion; it is a metaphysic, a theory of history, and much more important than either of these, it is what all of the Romantics—but Blake in particular—a vision, a way of seeing, and of living..." (page xxiii)

Remarkable congruences to some of Shevchenko's passages, especially with respect to shaping the concept of a nation and its people, may be found in the works of leading English Romantics of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. As in the case of the Ukrainian poet, William Wordsworth's writings gave form and direction to subsequent notions about his country's status as a nation-state, and its self-perception in particular. For him, the mediating action of "the folk" enables an organic-pastoral vision of nationality rooted in a natural attachment to physical land. He is also able to correlate the personal with the political, the national cause with the native son. "Home" equals pastoral harmony, the result of a perfect union between the people and their territory, which in turn produces the essential "Englishness" of the situation.

> Here, on our native soil, we breathe once more.
> The cock that crows, the smoke that curls, that sound
> Of bells; —those boys who in yon meadow-ground
> In white-sleeved shirts are playing; and the roar
> Of the waves breaking on the chalky shore; —
> All, all are English.[5]

Comparison with Shevchenko's quintessential description of a harmonious societal order reveals unlike sources for outwardly comparable tableaus. Where one poet speaks to a literal set of correlatives linking local habitat to ongoing patriotic pride, the other educes an internal configuration whose unity inheres in its *freedom* from relational rigidity i.e., in communitas — not in an avowed social or political order.

---

[5] William Wordsworth, *Poetical Works* (Thomas Hutchison, ed.), Oxford University Press, 1904, p. 243. This sonnet, "Composed in the Valley near Dover, on the Day of Landing," was written on the occasion of the poet's return from a four-week stay in France.

> 260 Садок вишневий коло хати,
> Хрущі над вишнями гудуть.
> Плугатарі з плугами йдуть,
> Співають, ідучи, дівчата,
> А матері вечерять ждуть.
> ("V kazemati" lines 260-264)

Wordsworth portrays a literal scenario, a specific and tangible external setting in which he names what he sees — there is no explicit artistic motive beyond listing the items before him. Shevchenko, on the other hand, intends to *reveal the state (of mind) of the poet*, the direction of his attention, and to share this condition with the reader. Where the English poem locates itself in time and space,[6] the Ukrainian one is generalized and therefore potentially more inclusive. The "cherry orchard by the house" of line 260 not only references a common image in Ukrainian folk songs ("Ой, у вишневому садочку / Там соловейко щебетав" and many others); it also acts as a synecdoche for the Ukrainian lands.

---

[6] The next quatrain begins: "All, all are English. Oft have I looked round / With joy in Kent's green vales; but never found / Myself so satisfied in heart before."

The evening scene may be from any part of the country; it intimates no particular era; no specific individual or perspective is identified. Significance arises from a progressive layering of non-binding and not necessarily reciprocally supportive relationships. The cherry trees provide shade and shelter for the house, and attract the smaller insects for the beetles (line 261) to feed on, but do these things passively and without restitutive requirements. Similar relations are echoed in the placement of the males and females in the next two lines. They each perform work of a separate but mutually interdependent nature. The women do not plough, for example, but their labor completes the agricultural task. The older women (the "mothers" in line 264) also contribute to the overall enterprise by providing nourishment. Just as Nature constantly dispenses without asking anything in return, so the undemanding affinity of the flowers and insects is reflected in the human world. No one is depicted as actually *doing* anything, but clearly much has been accomplished. The absence of direct and hierarchical effort reinforces the larger picture of communitas that Shevchenko builds in this section of the poem. Wordsworth's lines, though superficially similar in that they also portray a restful bucolic vista, have no such signifying strata. Theirs is a more direct call to connect images of contentment in the countryside with a sense of national belonging.

In her "Examination of Shevchenko's Romanticism" (starting on p. 439 of *Shevchenko and the Critics*) Lisa Efimov Schneider contrasts "Perebendia" with the beginning of Walter Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, a book-length epic poem.

> The way was long, the wind was cold,
> The Minstrel was infirm and old;
> His withered cheek, and tresses gray,
> Seemed to have known a better day;
> The harp, his sole remaining joy,
> Was carried by an orphan boy.
> The last of all the bards was he,
> Who sung of Border chivalry;
> . . . .
> . . . .
>
> A wandering harper, scorned and poor,
> He begged his bread from door to door;
> And tuned, to please a peasant's ear,
> The harp a king had loved to hear.[7]
> (Lines 1-8 and 23-26)

Schneider finds that the surface similarities between the two works cloak a markedly diverse poetics. As in Wordsworth's case,

---

[7] Walter Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, 3rd ed. (London, 1806) pp. 11 and 12. (Schneider quotes these two excerpts as if they were one contiguous passage, and does not provide line numbering.) A text like this stands much closer to the Kharkiv pre-Romantics than it does to Shevchenko. Compare, for example, these lines by Iakiv Shchoholev, taken from a poem titled, significantly, "Kobzar":

> Невидющий і убогий,
> З бідним гралом за плечем,
> Він чвалає полохливо
> За малим поводирем.

Shchoholev's work may well owe a direct debt to Walter Scott, for its final line reads "Грай, останній з могікан!" For further comment on the text see page 227 below.

Scott writes about concrete referents, carefully described with respect to details regarding actual places and events. According to Schneider, the *Lay* at times comes down to "almost a catalogue of such details" (p. 440), and as such should be seen as an attempt to convey real history, if in a mythologized (though not stylized) manner. Shevchenko's piece, on the other hand, reflects "the relationship between the history of a culture and its identity" as something which can only be grasped fully through "authentic folk speech"—a thoroughly Herderian notion (p. 441).

The Romantic capacity of the *Lay* does reside to a considerable extent in its exterior elements: the elevation of tradition, a loyalty to the past, an appeal to lost values which are nevertheless concentrated in a idealized artist-figure who can recover them for a select audience as required. These images are assembled in a more-or-less linear array to create mood, advance the narrative, and perhaps examine a historical theme. "Perebendia" certainly displays the same peripheral constituents, but their arrangement and highlighted interrelationships does not suggest a literal handling. Instead they constitute a powerful meditation on the process of poetic evocation and the social difficulties surrounding it. The "themes" concern themselves much less with *what* the bard expresses than with *how* he accesses his material.

Both the English poets and Shevchenko make liberal use of the literary conventions collectively described as Romanticism. Both present clear instances of addressing the reader's sense of socio-political self. The former, however, do so mainly through direct assertion of their points as surface-level intellectual arguments put forward for the reader's consideration. Changes in point of view, emotional quality, and temporal perspective are all brought about, of course, but not through any local or global alteration of deep structure. Shevchenko's verse, by contrast, achieves its shifts by transforming the entire linguistic dimension in which it happens to be operating, and hence secures modifications in "perception rules." These shifts occur i[illegible] series within a given poem, so that the overall effect is a succession of perceptual states corresponding to the shamanic technique of cognitive impairment resolution. Simply put, nothing comparable takes place in the works of the English Romantics, who are much more likely to employ straightforward dialectic devices for purposes of varying tone, mood, voice, authorial outlook, and the like.

While a full treatment of possible literary shamanism in the works of other European Romantics lies outside the tasks of this monograph, such a study would be well justified in the interests of a deeper understanding of vatic poetry in general. Visionary poets from a number of national traditions may well have direct parallels with the modality being documented, and a detailed inquiry should be undertaken eventually. Nevertheless, the immediate indications are that at best such moments do not figure significantly in standard Romantic poetics, and major contributors to that poetics like Wordsworth may not exhibit a similar modality even in externally analogous passages. When in his famous sonnet "Composed on Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802" we read "Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie / Open unto the fields and to the sky" (lines 6-7), the artistic device functions literally: an urban vista of human works joined in a harmony of sacred and secular, mercantile and military — all enveloped by benign Nature. But comparing this vision of London to Shevchenko's of St. Petersburg in "Son" shows an entirely different internal apparatus. The shamanic marker "хати" in line 276 refers to an absence of communitas and a preponderance of power structures residing in institutional hierarchies (line 274).

> Церкви, та палати,
> 275 Та пани пузаті,
> І ні однісінької хати.

The minimal overlap of shamanic and Romantic mechanisms in Shevchenko's poetry becomes clearer in juxtaposing it with texts from other Ukrainian writers of the period. Two classes of poetic endeavor appertain here in particular: the "pre-Romantics"[8] of the so-called Kharkiv School,[9] and Shevchenko's numerous epigones both during his lifetime and right into the twentieth century.

---

[8] This period designation arises because the writers it refers to largely failed to satisfy the broader criteria (mentioned on pp. 208-209 above) associated with the Romantic movement in

If to some extent the fragments from Scott and Wordsworth given above depend on sequences of specific images for their claim to the Romantic label, then the Kharkiv poets elevate this resource to the status of a compositional principle. Writing about the "graveyard school" in English poetry, Cleanth Brooks notes the perfunctory nature of some of these verses:

> With many of the [English] pre-Romantics, it is almost sufficient merely to point to the new poetic objects — owls, ivy, ruined towers, and yew trees. Indeed, some of their poems may be considered as little more than display cases filled with collections of such objects tied loosely together with appropriate interjections.[10]

European literature in general. At the same time, these writers do base their verse on a resurgence of interest in the idea of a *народ* ("the people"), a *Volksgeist*, and hence folkloric linguistic artifacts, especially as these matters were framed by Herder and the German Idealist philosophers. A broad summary of pre-Romanticism as a taxonomic category may be found on pp. 24-25 of Lilian R. Furst, *Romanticism*.

[9] The group was called thus because its three major members (L. Borovykovs'kyj, A. Metlyns'kyj, and M. Kostomarov) either studied or taught at the University of Kharkiv. Other contributors such as Ia. Shchoholev and M. Maksymovych (an amateur ethnographer) were also based there. George Grabowicz argues for a rethinking of Shchoholev's place among the Kharkiv Circle poets on p. 66 of *Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature*.

[10] Cleanth Brooks, "Notes for a Revised History of English Poetry," in *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (Chapel Hill, 1939) p. 233, quoted in George G. Grabowicz, *Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature* (Cambridge MA, 1981) p. 65.

George Grabowicz applies this observation to the works of the Kharkiv circle, stating that "[t]he corresponding Ukrainian "display cases" contain the steppe, burial mounds, Cossack lances and sabres, and *banduras*."[11] He then gives a further quote from Brooks, one intended to apply equally to the Ukrainian poetry: "Perhaps never before or since have poetic terms become cliches so rapidly; and this is a measure of the dependence placed upon them in securing the poetic effect."[12]

A simple perusal of the names of the pre-Romantics' poems already confirms the essential correctness of this appraisal. A partial list from Metlyns'kyj, as one instance, would include "Бандура," "Степ," "Спис," "Козак, гайдамак, чумак," "Гетьман," "Козача смерть," and "Смерть бандуриста"—and the pattern extends to the other poets as well. Certain titles, especially those strongly identified with Shevchenko's major shamanic markers, almost seem to be requisite. Thus we see "Могила" appearing as the title of works by Kostomarov, Oleksandr Afanas'iev-Chuzhbyns'kyj, Korsun, and Shchoholev; "Бандурист" names pieces by Borovykovs'kyj, Afanas'iev-Chuzhbyns'kyj, and Shashkevych among others.[13] There are also several minor variants and combinations of these (e.g., "Кобзар на могилі" by H. Andruz'kyj).

---

[11] George G. Grabowicz, *Toward a History*, p. 65.

[12] Grabowicz, *Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature*, p. 66, taken from p. 234 of Brooks, "Notes for a Revised History..."

But as already noted, the mere presence of such poetic topoi, while perhaps bringing the verses closer to textbook ideals of Romantic literature, do not of themselves constitute a shamanic mode. It is possible to have poetry which consists almost entirely of these components, yet does not perform any of the shamanically mediated consciousness-shifting that occurs in Shevchenko's works. Consider in this connection the opening fifteen lines of "Бандурист" by Levko Borovykovs'kyj.

> На дереві жовкне по осені лист...
> Свій вік переживши, сідий бандурист
> Підвіконню пісні співає.
> Біжить чередою за ним дітвора,
> Сідого проводять з двора до двора,
> А дід на бандуру їм грає:
> Під дзвонкії струни гетьмани встають,
> І прадіди в струнах бандури живуть,
> І дишуть холодні могили:

---

[13] Titles equivalent to "Бандурист" also exist in profusion: "Певец" by Mykola Markevych, "Співець" by Mykola Kostomarov, and many others. Virtually all of them depict prototypically Romantic bards addressing more-or-less Herderian issues. Here is an excerpt from Markevych, marrying Platonic ideas with socio-political ones à la Wordsworth:

> Певец вдохновенний назначен судьбою,
> Чтоб голосом дивным тревожить мечту,
> Чтоб петь и венчать благородной рукою
> Отчизну, свободу, любовь, красоту.
> ("Pevec," lines 17-20)

M. T. Iatsenko, ed., *Ukrains'ki poety-romantyky* (Kiev, 1987) pp. 101-102.

Бринять, —як козаки боролись з врагом....
І як під широким московським орлом,
Козаки нагрілись, спочили. —
Ті давні набіги, ті давні борби
Остались у головах старців сідих —
Там дідівська давність схована...

The remaining sixty or so lines of the poem are the actual song the minstrel sings taken in direct quotes, and relate specific events in Cossack history from the time of Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyj. The form becomes a stylized folk song in five-line verses complete with repeating refrains.

Written in 1830, this passage may well have served as inspiration for Shevchenko; certainly he was not adverse to reworking the first section of Borovykovs'kyj's 1828 "Molodytsia" for the opening of his own "Prychynna," for example. But Borovykovs'kyj, like Scott and Wordsworth, limits himself to a literal retelling of a narrative. The crucial (for purposes of this discussion) lines 7 to 9 lead up to a mere story. Line 9 says that "the cold burial mounds breathe" i.e., come to life, but the poet takes care to keep this at the level of a metaphor for the movement and sound of the instrument's strings — made explicit by the first word in line 10. He refers unequivocally and only to music and song; there is no actual access to the past as such, its mental states or other cognitive qualities. More importantly, the author himself never appears in any agential capacity, and hence can neither model nor effect transitions between perceptual modes.

Shevchenko, by contrast, appears as the active agent in a textually mediated journey from present to past and back again. Borovykovs'kyj's bard is able to "raise the *hetmans*" in line 7 above, but stops at that: these avatars of power and political self-sufficiency do not receive a voice, nor any opportunity to influence the inner conditions of even the writer — much less, then, of the reader. In Shevchenko's texts, these very same beings are permitted — indeed commanded — to commune with the authorial identity to the extent of actually blending with it, so that the poet can subsequently speak directly with their voice. Witness the already-quoted passage from "Hajdamaky" (page 190, note 6):

> Заспіваю—море грає,
> Вітер повіває,
> Степ чорніє, і могила
> З вітром розмовляє.
> Заспіваю—розвернулась
> Висока могила,
> Аж до моря запорожці
> Степ широкий вкрили.
> Отамани на вороних
> Перед бунчуками
> Вигравають...
>
> (lines 109-119)

As in the Borovykovs'kyj piece, the burial mound is brought to life (lines 113-114), but while there it does nothing further, in the later work the same event reifies the people and mind-set of the time to which it alludes. Beyond this, the symbolic resources personified by the Cossack-figures of lines 115 and 117 enter into (that is, blend with) the narrator's inner state — his *хатина*, lines 134-135 — and shape it accordingly.

Вигравають... А пороги
Меж очеретами
Ревуть, стогнуть, розсердились,
Щось страшне співають.
Послухаю, пожурюся,
У старих спитаю:
«Чого, батьки, сумуєте?»
«Невесело, сину!
Дніпро на нас розсердився,
Плаче Україна...»
І я плачу. А тим часом
Пишними рядами
Виступають отамани,
Сотники з панами
І гетьмани — всі в золоті,
У мою хатину
Прийшли, сіли коло мене
І про Україну
Розмовляють, розказують,
("Hajdamaky," lines 119-137)

This shift of cognitive perspective from a Ukrainian (and perhaps peasant) -identified narrator to a shamanic one is brokered precisely by the poet's power to open up the past, here transparently represented by burial mounds, in this special way. The remainder of the epic thus emerges as the direct product of this initial shamanizing on the part of the artist. Listening to the shamanically obligatory rapids and reeds (lines 119-120) who are "singing something terrible/frightful" (line 122), he also consults with his conjured familiars as to what the problem might be. In lines 125-129 he receives a minimal outline of a liminal state: the river is angry with us, and the country is in tears. Shevchenko fuses himself with Ukraine and enters the identical condition (lines 128-129: "Плаче Україна... / І я плачу."), but in the middle of line 129 he begins a shamanic process by bringing the Cossack-familiars into his "house" to receive instruction from them (line 132 on).

And the instruction is considerable. For the next 35 or so lines the Cossacks explain the Ukrainian past, perform for him, bring him into their company, and in the process demonstrate a tremendous leveling of generational (line 162) and administrative (lines 165-169) divides.

> «Гуляй, пане, без жупана,
> Гуляй, вітре, полем,
> Грай, кобзарю, лий, шинкарю,
> Поки встане доля».
> Взявшись в боки, навприсідки
> Парубки з дідами.
> «Отак, діти! добре, діти!
> Будете панами».
> Отамани на бенкеті,
> Неначе на раді,
> Похожають, розмовляють;
> Вельможна громада
> Не втерпіла, ударила
> Старими ногами.
>
> (lines 157-170)

The resulting picture embodies a situation of consummate communitas in part predicated on shamanic ecstasy (e.g., lines 157-160), until a transition into a fully reincorporated phase on

Shevchenko's part occurs in lines 173-180:

Дивлюся, сміюся, дрібні утираю —
Я не одинокий, є з ким в світі жить;
У моїй хатині, як в степу безкраїм,
Козацтво гуляє, байрак гомонить,
У моїй хатині синє море грає,
Могила сумує, тополя шумить,
Тихесенько Гриця дівчина співає —
Я не одинокий, є з ким вік дожить.

Internal balance has now been completely restored through having *internalized* the essential characteristics symbolized in the steppe, Cossackdom, the sea, and so on. From here the poet, now cognizant of his corrected constitution (line 182: "От де моя слава."), can undertake to send his verses into the world to bring about similar states in other people, even if only by being recognized for what they are.

Піду синів випровожать
В далеку дорогу.
Нехай ідуть — може, найдуть
Козака старого,
Що привіта моїх діток
Старими сльозами.

(lines 189-194)

These lines implement Shevchenko's famous poems-as-children metaphor, usually associated with his two "Dumy moi" texts. However, the trope also forms the substance of the lines following the above passage and set is off with a blank line. Especially in the section comprised of lines 202-194 (not reproduced here), the writer ruminates on the method and consequences of what he is about to do, and even supplies instructions on the mode the reader should assume while reading.

Єсть у мене щирий батько
(Рідного немає) —
Дасть він мені раду з вами,
Бо сам, здоров, знає,
Як то тяжко блукать в світі
Сироті без роду;
(lines 229-243)

Only then does he start the "Introduktsia" section. Almost all of what has gone before partakes of preparation for shamanic work.

Clearly, nothing remotely similar takes place at the level of deep structure in the Borovykovs'kyj piece, nor indeed in any other Ukrainian poet who may be considered a Romantic. In fact, a number of compositions which overflow with bardic imagery and references to Cossacks actually obtain the opposite effect of Shevchenko's rhetorical shifts: they emphasize and describe at length the poet's *inability* to evoke anything worthwhile from seemingly promising kobza-players. Here is a Petrarchan sonnet by Ambrosij Metlyns'kyj entitled "Bandura."

Та чи ви вже, братця, не чували
Про старого козака-співаку?
Вспом'янім лиш його йому ж в дяку!
Бо вже які й чули, позабували...

Про гетьмана чи про гайдамаку
Дід заспіває, в бандуру заграє, —
Плаче бандура, мов оживає:
Жаль візьме дитину, візьме і бурлаку!

Його бандура, схоче він, завиє,

Його бандура й вороном закряче,
Мов та дитина, жалібно плаче...

Сльози поллються, серденько ниє,
Де ж ти дівався, та старий співаче?
Ой заспівай нам про життя козаче!

The closing tercet underscores the absence of the very voice the communal reader is being asked to praise in line 3. After spending the entire poem describing the musician's abilities, no actual song or playing has been obtained or appears obtainable. The point emerges that there *is* no voice of Ukrainian self-description — which ironically happens to be one marker of the separation state in Shevchenko's treatment of the same material, and a problem he consciously sets out to correct.

An even more egregious example of "muting the bard" appears in Ia. Shchoholev's poem "Kobzar," already mentioned in note 5 of this chapter. The piece deliberately invokes "Perebendia" — recall from note 2 on page 183 that "Кобзарь" was the name given for a time by Shevchenko to that work — with such lines as:

І з двора у двір заходе,
На бандурі виграва,
І під дзики струн то псальму,
То про Лазаря співа...
(lines 13-16)

But where Shevchenko's minstrel controls a gamut of genres and topics corresponding to the various social segments he addresses, Shchoholev's is competent only in jocular ditties.[14] The poet-narrator specifically requests historical material (lines 18-20), but the singer pleads unfamiliarity with such matters and instead offers a program of folksy doggerel.

> «А заграй мені, кобзарю,
> Про Підкову та Сомка,
> Про Хмеля, про Дорошенка,
> Ще й про грізного Сірка!»
>
> «Ні, не знаю! Може, грати
> Попадевої біди,
> Про Хому, та про Ярему,
> Та хіба Сковороди?[15]
>
> (lines 17-24)

After hearing a few more suggestions in the same vein, the poet-listener gives up: "Грай, що хоч; бо й те ізгине" (line 29). What could and should have been uplifting and instructive instead has produced only indifference and pessimism.

Vatic incompetence of this kind, then, comes forward as a primary indicator of the difference between Shevchenko and his fellow Romantic and pre-Romantic poets, as well as his myriad imitators. Concerning the latter group, the same skaldic insufficiency exhibited by the bards depicted in the poems examined above shows itself in their creators as well. A wonderfully telling case in point, not fully developed here, resides in the several attempts to mimic — or, more accurately, plagiarize — Shevchenko's "Dumy moi," especially the 1840 poem of that name. The work is densely shamanic in that it addresses the interaction of the author's thought-poems with the perceptual modes of groups of readers. It also details Shevchenko's acute awareness of the shamanic origin and function of his poetry, especially in the first and last fifteen lines, respectively.[16]

---

[14] The allusion to Skovoroda in line 24 may seem out of place among the other facetious references, but in fact may not be. His texts appear in the operetta *Natalka poltavka*, for example.

[15] A. I. Kostenko, compiler, *Poety poshevchenkivs'koi doby* (Kyiv, 1961) p. 224.

And it is exactly these passages that the epigones chose for their assembly line emulations. In 1848, one Mykhajlo Petrenko produced a poem beginning

> Думи мої, думи мої,
> Де ви подівались,
> Нащо мене покинули,
> Чому одцурались?

and ending "Нащо мене покинули, / Думи мої, думи!" Forty lines of alternating, plaintive vocatives and interrogatives end exactly where they started with no intervening variation of any kind — a truly exemplary "display case" containing a single artifact.

There exists a startling quantity of such material. Some slavishly imitate the form, perhaps substituting some other key Shevchenko-artifact in place of the "думи." Thus Shyshats'kyj-

---

[16] Shevchenko covers this same territory using essentially identical verbal formulations in "Hajdamaky" lines 37-48 and 202-248. If anything, the scrutiny here is even more intense than in "Dumy moi" ("Lykho meni z vamy").

Illich copies Petrenko's copy in 1855, right down to the number of lines and typographic style, but using *доля* as the title.

Доле моя, доле моя,
Нене моя рідна,
Де ти в світі тиняєшся,
Що тебе й не видно?..

Others prefer to stay closer to Shevchenko in both topics and formalities of expression. Here is the first quatrain of H. Vorobkevych's "Moi dumy":

Розпустив я мої думи
по світу блукати,
а не найдуть правди-волі,
назад повертати.

Even as notable a name as Iurij Fed'kovych duplicates Shevchenko at least twice, once in "Dumy moi" ("Думи мої, думи руськi, відки ви ся взєли?"), and again in the amazing "Dumy moi, dity moi," where he simply lifts Shevchenko's wording verbatim:

Думи мої, діти мої,
Лихо мені з вами!
Поклав би вас, як жовняре,
Пишними рядами

Nor is this kind of reproduction limited to "Dumy moi" alone. Many of Shevchenko's titles, images, and verbal patterns recur in the writers mentioned and in many of their contemporaries. Yet in spite of the crudity of most such textual simulation, it is by no means a trivial phenomenon. While a shamanically oriented reading of Shevchenko can shed light on the linguistic and semantic structures of these verses and their relationships to the broader literary process, the necessary detail of study lies beyond the scope of the present paper.

Another fascinating if forbiddingly multifarious source of insight into the shamanic character of Shevchenko's opus lies at the unexpected interface between the 19th century Ukrainian poet and a body of literature not only shamanically inspired and created, but one also based on an underlying communitas/structure dichotomy — the earliest writings associated with the system of precepts and methods known as Taoism, and in particular its central text, the *Tao Teh Ching* (hereafter abbreviated as *TTC*), putatively written down around 500 B.C.[17] Although this is not the place for a full exposition, a brief characterization of Taoist philosophy (or more exactly world view) may be in order before detailing the associations between Shevchenko and the *TTC*.

Like shamanism, Taoist beliefs and practices are older than recorded civilization, originating in an age when humans were likely much less dependent on formally symbolic, linear, or evidence-based constructs for their everyday cognition needs. Perhaps in direct consequence of this, the very object of the system's attention is exceedingly difficult to define, and "the manner of its expression varies so greatly that there is no conceptual framework that will encompass all the manifestations of thought and action commonly referred to as Taoist."[18] At the same time, "[t]he general idea of Tao is beyond a doubt the most fundamental and pervasive concept to be found in Chinese thought, and as such lends itself to use in almost any context." In fact, it may be said that "Chinese civilization was originally a product of Taoism in the sense that like all successful original cultures it was originated and guided by people in contact with the Tao or universal law."[19]

---

[17] Issues surrounding the dating and authorship of the *TTC* partake of some of the most contentious questions in all of Chinese literature. Not the least source of difficulty is that the book we now know by that name likely came into existence over a substantial period of time and may have had multiple contributors. A somewhat popularized overview of these problems may be found in Ellen M. Chen, *The Tao Teh Ching: A New Translation with Commentary* (New York, 1989) pp. 4-22.

Some time after the sixth century B.C. the diffuse ideas of this hitherto unnamed teaching were brought together and written down by a person or persons unknown but traditionally referred to as "Lao Tzu," the Old Master, by which name the *TTC* also goes. In spite of its relative brevity (81 "chapters" — actually short poems seldom exceeding twenty lines — totaling fewer than five thousand words) the *TTC's* status in world culture is comparable to that of the Bible, the Koran, or the Vedas. (After the Bible, it is the most frequently translated book in the world and the one that has engendered the most commentary.[20]) Like other seminal texts of the various world religions, the *TTC* derives much of its force from a protean quality in its style. Condensed to the point of obscurity, heavily allusive, deliberately ambiguous and paradoxical, it uses its own tightly constructed indeterminacy to reflect not so much Truth as *ways* in which a precept may be considered true, and thus supplies insights at whatever level a given reader (or age) needs or is able to accommodate them.

---

[18] Thomas Cleary, transl., *The Book of Balance and Harmony*, (San Francisco, 1989) p. vii.

[19] Cleary, pp. vii-vii and ix. The Chinese word *tao* (道) is generally left untranslated, but its common dictionary meaning is "path" or, more poetically, The Way. In its broadest connotation it refers to the underlying, comprehensive, primordial state and process of everything and of every thing.

Some internal evidence suggests that the book may have been addressed to the ruler of a country, but it functions at many other levels as well. Among other applications, it is a treatise on the art of government, of a person as well as of a state. While not a manual of the esoteric Taoist trance practices, it is intended to show how the Power (one translation of the title's *Teh* 德 character) accessed in the trance state gives control over one's material circumstances and forms the basis for a metaphysic. Moreover, the very method of composition suggests a spirit medium authorship.[21] Preliminary investigations indicate that the correspondences between the *TTC* and the *Kobzar* merit a monograph-length treatment; the present observations are adduced only in order to support the trance-medium hypothesis.

---

[20] Holmes Welch, *Taoism: The Parting of the Way* (Boston, 1965) p. 4. Welch gives a list of scriptural quotations of Jesus's words in parallel with virtually identical passages from the *TTC* (pp. 5-6). This book is one of the best synopses of Taoism written in English; a fuller and more technical treatment can be found in Henri Maspero, *Taoism* (MIT Press, 1981).

Both the *TTC* and Shevchenko's book bear marks of having been composed in response to major socio-political transitions. China was moving from a loosely organized society to formal feudalism; a document appeared defining the parameters of this passage and providing instruction in how to best adapt to it. Ukraine had already undergone a transformation from a self-determining to a vassal state; a poet emerges whose writings point to ways of mitigating the ensuing trauma. Both works orient themselves on a prior state of harmonious simplicity: communitas in Shevchenko and the Tao in the Chinese case.[22] Besides the dichotomy of natural state/artificial civilization, the *TTC* can often be interpreted as opposing the Confucian (heavily structured) political order to the Taoist one. ("Govern a large country as you would cook a small fish" [*TTC* 60] — that is, with a minimum of interference.)[23] Similarly, Shevchenko ties the Ukrainian loss of primal beatitude to forced inclusion into the Imperial order (e.g., the description of St. Petersburg in "Son.")

---

[21] "The extent to which shamans and spirit mediums have exerted an influence on Chinese literature is not generally appreciated. The early development of the Chinese written language is directly linked to a spirit medium cult... [I]n one popular technique the medium wrote with a stylus on a table or tray covered with sand." (Gary Seaman, *Journey to the North: An Ethnohistorical Analysis and Annotated Translation of the Chinese Folk Novel* Pei-yu-chi. [University of California Press, 1987] p. 12.) Almost all of the Taoist canon, including much of the *TTC* itself, was composed by tranced mediums using this sand-stylus method. Furthermore, the declared objectives of spirit medium cults was and is to produce "tract literature to morally inform and uplift the masses." (Seaman, p.12.) Although Shevchenko was not a professional medium, the similarities of his poetry's "purpose," formal features, and reader response to those of the Chinese texts continues to suggest at common — specifically shamanic — functionality.

Consistent with certain similar political and (perhaps) compositional circumstances under which the two books of poetry were written are their textual parallels. Some express identical philosophical positions, such as the commentary on the world's reactions to shamanic art:

> When a foolish scholar hears of Tao
> He laughs out loud.
> But if he did not laugh at it,
> It would not be Tao.
> (*TTC*, 41)

These lines not only reiterate the intercultural adage that "Great wisdom seems like great stupidity," but also find *affirmation* of the elemental wisdom in common people's reaction to it. Shevchenko also confirms that his minstrel is on the right track precisely when he is being ridiculed for wandering along the sea(!)shore:

---

[22] The *Lao Tzu* makes reference to such a state at least as frequently as Shevchenko does. Chapter 80 of the *TTC* in particular is devoted in its entirely to a description of communitas and its several benefits, using much the same wording as the *Kobzar*.

[23] Many instances of such Taoist/Confucian conflict are found throughout the *TTC*. Some of them parallel Shevchenko's Russian/-Ukrainian political oppositions as alluded to in the poetry.

> На божеє слово вони б насміялись
> Дурним би назвали, од себе прогнали,
> «Нехай понад морем, —сказали б, —гуля!»
>
> Добре єси, мій кобзарю,
> Добре, Батьку, робиш
> ("Perebendia," lines 77-81)

Other instances of textual correspondence extend beyond identical precepts to duplications of form and tropes in the context of setting forth these precepts. One particularly striking example involves lines 104-110 of *Hajdamaky* together with the second half of Chapter 20 in the *TTC*.

> Ви розумні люди—
> А я дурень; один собі
> У моїй хатині
> Заспіваю, заридаю,
> Як мала дитина.
> Заспіваю—море грає,
> Вітер повіває

In translation, the matching section of the *Lao Tzu* reads:

> Like a baby that has not yet learned to smile,
> Listless as one who has no home to return to.
> ....
> ....
> What a fool am I!
> What a muddled mind I have!
> Most people are bright, bright:

I alone am dim, dim.
All men are sharp, sharp:
I alone am mum, mum!
Calm like the sea,
Ceaseless like a high wafting wind.[24]

Both texts make reference to a small child, being at home, and where one has "not smiling" the other has "crying." Both have a contiguous "you're smart, I'm stupid" assertions in the sense of counterpoising the shaman-sage-bard to the common crowd. And finally both follow this with immediate references to sea and wind. All in some 8-10 lines each! Such extensive, maximally dense (in the sense that neither text interposes any non-mutual material over the range of lines selected) correlation in passages produced by unrelated cultures and separated by more than two millennia is difficult to explain without positing a common experience not bound by the literary conventions or extra-literary realia of any given time or place.

---

[24] 我獨泊兮其未兆
如嬰兒之未孩
儽儽兮若無所歸
衆人皆有餘
而我獨若遺
我愚人之心也哉
沌沌兮
俗人昭昭
我獨昏昏
俗人察察
我獨悶悶
澹兮其若海
飂兮若無止

Both the original and the translation are taken from John C. H. Wu, transl., *Tao Teh Ching*, (N.Y. 1961) pp. 40 and 41.

This common experience appears to be precisely that of the seemingly muddled shaman-in-trance, the internal situation of one who is in the act of availing himself of a power state which those around him do not understand but will later access and use through him. Further, descriptions of such experiences appear to lie at the root of at least some archetypes. In this connection it is worth noting that more than any other literary texts, both the *Kobzar* and the *Lao Tzu* define their respective cultures.

Chapter Eight

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

> "[I]t is time for a shamanology."
> —*Gloria Flaherty*

One of the enduring paradoxes bequeathed by Taras Shevchenko is the fact that as his oeuvre passes repeatedly through layers of commentary and analysis over successive generations of readers, the goal of a full understanding of this material seems to recede. The nature of the internal programming in Shevchenko's poetic art becomes *more* hidden with growing explication, and the core mechanisms via which his works exert the authority they do remain as elusive as ever. It is almost as if the texts had been deliberately furnished with hidden features designed to frustrate a frontal diagnostic assault.

One set of responses to this complex and sometimes confusing state of affairs has been to keep the discussion at the level of the verbal sign.[1] Another, rejecting such reductive simplifications, supplemented the surface level with investigations of deep structure; attempts to chart the mythic patterns, to apply the techniques of psychoanalytic criticism to Shevchenko's verse have begun to gain acceptance with the current generation of scholars.[2] However, even these methods are yielding less than a lucid delineation of the deeper principles of the poetry's composition. In the preamble to an article on the poet's self-perception, George Grabowicz writes: "The thematic and conceptual structures ... do appear as discrete forces. But the psychological ground, the actual matter on and in which they work, seems disconcertingly fluid." And later in the same paragraph, "There is never a thing, an attitude, or a belief, but a concatenation of responses to it, a force field."[3] Note that the use of the word "force" in both passages moves the writings from the realm of the purely literary object (that is, the symbolic verbal artifact) to the arena of physical phenomena. The recourse to metaphors from physics hints at the inadequacy of mere textual description and analysis.

---

[1] For instance, the Soviet position on Shevchenko's theology has been to cite the passages in which he challenges God, and on their basis to declare that the writer was an atheist, hence necessarily a materialist. G. Grabowicz gives some additional examples of this kind of approach on pp. 159-161 of *PAM*.

And on the following page Grabowicz does admit to precisely such an inadequacy. "An inevitable consequence of this existential precocity ... was the opaqueness, at times the virtual invisibility, of major features of his poetry for the convention- and tradition-bound reader and critic." Grabowicz then broaches the need for additional or alternate tools, such as examining the texts in terms of their mythic codes or from a non-linear, non-deterministic point of view. Other (post-)structuralist and archetypal critical approaches have been suggested by various scholars as well.[4]

---

[2] Examples include Leonid Pliushch's *Ekzod Tarasa Shevchenka: Navkolo "Moskalevoi krynytsi": Dvanadtsiat' stativ* (Edmonton, 1986), and George Grabowicz's *PAM*.

[3] George G. Grabowicz, "Self-Definition and Decentering: Ševčenko's "Xiba samomu napysat'" and the Question of Writing," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. XIV No. 3-4. Dec. 1990 p. 313.

The present work tenders a further extension of the tool-set for handling Shevchenko's literary corpus, and sets forth in some detail one specific implementation of it. At issue is the notion of a *mode* within which the poetry constitutes itself: a collection of distinct textual properties and attributes together with the relationships into which they arrange themselves. Some of the modes in Shevchenko's verse are well-known, such as the lyrical or the political. These are distinguished by means of particular thematic/stylistic features, identified with individual poems, and generally serve as a primary buffer for classification and apperception of any given piece. However, neither the modes as they are currently conceived nor the narratives for which they serve as vehicles or frameworks supply a full and adequate explanation for the enduring transcendent veneration accorded the poet, or the transcendental influence of the poetry on the entire spectrum of Ukrainian culture.[5]

---

[4] For example, George S. N. Luckyj "Ševčenko and Blake," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* vol. 2 no.1 (1978) p. 94. The article compares how the two poets each presented a vision of life based on mythopoetic and archetypal perception.

Accordingly, a more refined instrument might be conceived for discerning hidden modalities in Shevchenko's literary art. One such modality, based on rhetorical transformation of perceptual space, may be demonstrated to inhere in at least some of the poems. Although previously undocumented, this functional complex undoubtedly plays a considerable role in Shevchenko reception. This paper labels it the *shamanic* mode (alongside the better-known ones like the historical, lyrical, folkloric, etc. modes) and has been concerned with procedurally defining it, then attesting to its manifestations along with the textual dynamics thereof.

The term "shamanic" has been employed in literary studies only occasionally, and even then not consistently. Most commentators simply point to the presence of shamanism's reflexes in a literary work, especially as these were described by M. Eliade: ritual objects or descriptions of shamanic ecstasy.

---

[5] Speaking about the great 13th century Sufi mystic and poet, Jalal-ud-Din Rumi, Andrew Harvey writes, "No other poet in history — not even Shakespeare or Dante — has had so exalted and comprehensive an impact on the civilization he adorned, and no other poet has aroused such ecstatic and intimate adoration." (*The Way of Passion: A Celebration of Rumi* (Berkeley, 1994) p. 1) Harvey does not exaggerate in his assessment, but leaving aside the question of how such things are to be quantified, it is safe to say that Shevchenko easily surpasses Rumi with respect to the above impact statement.

Others, like Leonid Pliushch in his major article on Shevchenko and shamanism examined in chapter one, end up equating the function of the shaman with *any* supernatural agency, superstition, folk beliefs, or simply odd behavior. In part these failings flow from the prevailing state of scholarship in the fields examining shamanism: confusion of fact and fiction, process with product, and a general lack of historic accountability when citing previously published material.

The present study does not discount the existence of shamanic reflexes in Shevchenko's works. References to animal spirit-familiars, for example, are intriguing pointers to altered states of consciousness that appear to be common to most shamanically inspired literature—especially when the animal-familiar topoi consistently appear alongside other shamanically-identified images and allusions. However, in this monograph "shamanic" is mainly used in a much stricter sense, one more closely modelled on the structuralist's approach.

First, "shaman" is generalized approximately as follows. It is now posited by cognition theorists ranging from exponents of gynocriticism to artificial intelligence researchers that all self-identified social units (tribes, countries, individuals) need *stories* — binding narratives which function to prevent dissolution of people and resources, to focus effort, and to preserve what is already achieved. When these stories (that is, myths) are forgotten, changed, or grow outmoded, it is the shamans' job to reinstate, repair, or replace them. Whether the persons charged with this task are formally called "shamans" or are officially recognized as performing maintenance on the aggregate discursive order/code — this does not change the essential dynamics of their duties. In historically remote or pre-industrial societies, the "shaman function" — basically that of preserving the collective sanity of a people through manipulation of the shared symbolic system — was explicitly entrusted to professionals: the various species of "dream doctor" later classified under the broad heading of shaman by missionaries, travellers, and anthropologists.

There is evidence that originally the shaman function was multiplex, inherently equipped to express itself as liturgy, dance, divination, spell-weaving, herbalism, or assorted performative utterances — to name just a few of its aspects — as the situation required. With time, this formerly undifferentiated art appears to have gradually fragmented into a number of more-specialized practices. Some "shamans" in effect became prognosticators, others acted as counsels and arbiters, still others settled into primarily priestly roles; but all remained accountable to the fundamental directive of re-establishing the major part of the symbolically-mediated equilibrium immediately responsible for society's health and vitality whenever it was seen to be threatened. One such branch of the original shamanic function evolved into modern psychotherapy. Another (as detailed in chapter two) probably provided the basis for ancient theatre and hence literature as we now know it.

Second, the central dynamic of literature-as-shamanism is taken to be the "trance-journey" undertaken by the shamanically-oriented practitioner (here, literary artist), sometimes at will, for purposes of securing a verbalization (elsewhere called "sacred knowledge") of the desired symbolic order. Jacques Lacan is most famous for observing that "the unconscious is structured like a language." It also appears to be structured like a narrative. This narrative goes verbally unarticulated most of the time, expressing itself sporadically in fixed, ritualized utterances (prayers, oaths, proverbs, e.g.) or perhaps the cross-cultural legends and fairy-tales which lend credibility to the Jungian theory of archetypes. For the most part, these utterances serve to support socially constructed reality well enough for day-to-day living. Occasionally, however, someone will learn or be compelled to go beyond the ritual forms of expression — while possibly being guided by them — to the direct, unconscious narrative that is the source of the ritualized narrative.[6] When such a journey occurs with the apparent aim (or result) of restoring a failing group-story (be it a tribe's unclear understanding of its origins or a company's weak "corporate vision"), a direct patch to that story obtained from the journey—supplying a foundation myth, creating a "mission statement" —constitutes a shamanic intervention. If the agent happens to be a writer and performs such discursive interventions repeatedly, we can speak meaningfully of literary shamanism, not just as some parallel surface features, but *as an integral functional mode*.

As described throughout this thesis, Shevchenko does give signs of making shamanic excursions, thus defined, in a significant subset of his poetry. Where does he go? Arguably, to a different cognitive space. In a literate culture, every cognitive space generates its own linguistic space; the linguistic space, in turn, can act as a pointer back to the original cognitive space.[7] This mechanism allows those members of society who are unable to visit the desired internal states to partake of them regardless via the linguistic territory constructed by the poems. Doing so, especially more than once, leads to at least a partial restructuring of the individual's cognitive resources, and hence to a reinterpretation of his or her circumstances. Such revision constitutes a textually-mediated "shift" to (in this case) an improved world view. If the poet manages to incline his audience towards the use of certain word and phrase associations, or to see relations among them and certain events differently, then he has achieved a "rhetoric of healing": unity/belonging instead of fragmentation, empowerment rather than victimhood, and so on.

---

[6] All this implies, à la Jung, the existence of an archetypal *ur*-text underlying the collective experience of a people or even humanity in general. It is not the purpose of this thesis to demonstrate the reality of such an *ur*-text. Instead, it *posits* such an entity and describes how some of its features would manifest themselves if it had an objective referent.

[7] Such processes are well-documented as the basis of several psychotherapeutic technologies, as has been mentioned in chapters two and five.

Arrival at this linguistic space as it is exemplified in the poems may be signaled by means of a number of verbal markers: distinctive items from an imagic lexicon, recurrent topoi, specific collocations and associations. Some of the more important ones have been treated in considerable detail in this thesis: хата, чужина, *доля*, invocations to the Evening Star, burial mounds, weeds, water (especially as "синєє море"), and select allusions to the state of communitas. Others such as dream flight, дума, and bird-familiars receive less attention, but are positioned within the system of shamanic indices in groups of poems. Demonstrating the pertinence of such items, determining their patterns of interaction, and discovering new instances thereof has been a pivotal task of this thesis.[8] Once it is in place, building on this system reveals a structured program of textually-mediated cognitive reauthoring inherent in the poetic corpus as a whole.

The most important among these textual signposts come from passages popularly regarded as "historical," or at least evocative of the glorious Cossack "past" (минуле), which had led some readers to believe that Shevchenko was concerned mainly with an accurate representation of historiographic details. But in fact, as Grabowicz and others have taken pains to demonstrate, the poet operated inside of mythic rather than chronological time. The excursions into Cossack settings actually correspond, in many instances, to entry into altered but highly specialized states of awareness, mental configurations in which time and memory behave in non-standard ways. Such journeys may also take place without any dimension of Cossackdom or historicized narrative being present. But wherever they do occur, they are presaged by defined textual indicators and give rise to passages with similar structural characteristics. Because these textual structures lead the reader through specific stages of perception, interpretation, and redefinition (of personal and communal identity, role, purpose, etc.), they can bring about corresponding mental alignments in the audience as well. To the extent that such poetically-mediated realignments relieve anxiety, fear, or confusion brought on by sudden intractable upheavals of the social system, they constitute a therapeutic intervention into "failures of symbolic order." Insofar as the texts effecting such mediation are written under conditions of trance-journey, they form the basis for a poetic shamanism.

---

[8] For example, an anthropological description of shamanic initiation points us to N. N. ("Meni trynadtsiatyj mynalo..."), which same structure, albeit slightly mutated, is then also noticed in "Lichy v nevoli..." But the essentially shamanic passages in this second poem repeatedly make mention of weeds. A search for more references to weeds in other poems uncovers passages which yield additional collocations with shamanizing, and thus expands the repertoire of relevant markers.

Shevchenko's implementation of mythic time in this manner accords with well-know examples of shamanic world view construction in some Asian cultures—which perhaps helps to account for the strong resemblance to the Daoist verses discussed at the end of chapter seven. Writing about Tibetan society as the product of an interplay between clerical and shamanic (Tantric) Buddhism, Geoffrey Samuel observes that the latter tradition viewed its (oral) teachings as having originated in a "primal time" or "Great Time" of myth. "It is not seen as a text composed by a human author but as a revelation from the primal time."[9] The shamanic perspective here holds that sufficiently powerful lamas/shamans can always reestablish direct contact with *bodhisattvas* (specific founding figures of Buddhism who are understood to be earthly projections or emanations of universal archetypes),

---

[9] Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington, 1993) p.19.

> who exist, rather like the Dreaming beings of the Australian Aborigines, on a different plane of reality that interpenetrates our ordinary reality. The lineage of teachings is therefore in the shamanic Buddhist view not simply a heritage handed on from the distance past, it is something that is being constantly recreated and revalidated through the experiences of contemporary lamas and yogic practitioners.
>
> In this way the lamas, like the Siberian shaman or "diviners" or "prophets" of sub-Saharan Africa, can realign human beings with their society and with the universe in which they live by producing a new and contemporary reading of the tradition.[10]

Something similar may be postulated as the psychosocial basis of Shevchenko's own forays into non-chronological time and the mythic constructs obtained while governed by its cognitive conditions.

The application of a shamanic model in *shevchenkoznavstvo* sets forth less than a paradigm shift but more than just a new reading. As an interpretive frame through which to apprehend the complexities of Shevchenko's poetic legacy, it may serve to identify patterns which, when mapped via the principles suggested here, reveal layers in the texts that are not easily otherwise discernable. As an investigative approach to the questions of

---

[10] Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans* p. 21.

Shevchenko reception, it can illuminate factors other than the ones traditionally called upon to explain the poetry's almost preternatural effect on its readers, especially Ukrainian ones.

Beyond the issues of close reading, reader response, or ethnopsychology, there lies the whole domain of literary process. If, as we have seen, the shamanic mode is *not* active in the works of Shevchenko's predecessors or those who attempted to follow in his footsteps, could any semblance of it be detected in, say, ritual folkloric lyrics or the *dumy*? Does the shamanic modality reappear anywhere in Ukrainian literature after Shevchenko? Arguably, it does. Ivan Drach's remarkable 1964 poem "Kryla" ("The Wings"), for example, overtly describes the spontaneous calling of an unwilling subject to poetic shamanizing, and the social aftermath thereof. Yet the compositional principles here are largely unlike Shevchenko's. Without committing at this point to a technical argument, it seems very likely that some of Lina Kostenko's poetry could benefit from being reviewed in shamanic terms, as could the compositions of the early (1920s) Pavlo Tychyna.

It has been the burden of this dissertation to expose a heretofore essentially unknown discursive modality in the verse canon of Ukraine's most influential cultural figure, and to demonstrate some of its textual manifestations in a systematic manner. At the minimum, the result yields a technical methodology not inferior to that put forward by, say, some flavors of Jungian psychology. Beyond critical device, a shamanological specification for Shevchenko studies provides a set of "filters" through which relationships between the divers segments of the field may be scrutinized for congruences or inconsistencies.

Finally, not the least interesting consequence of the schemata unearthed in the present study is the sheer fact that after numerous decades of being the object of some of the most intense scholarly investigations in literary science, the words of Taras Shevchenko retain the power to present researchers with yet another facet. While not itself shamanic, this quality does testify to an additional dimension in an already sufficiently profound corpus. Thus, if complexity escalation of this type can be shown to be recursive, the receding comprehension anomaly remarked on at the start of this chapter will stand explained.

SOURCES CONSULTED

Balikci, Asen *The Netsilik Eskimo* (New York, 1970)

Bancroft, Anne *Origins of the Sacred: The Spiritual Journey in Western Tradition* (London, 1987)

Bloom, Harold *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* Revised & enlarged edition (Cornell University Press, 1971)

Brooks, Cleanth "Notes for a Revised History of English Poetry," in *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (Chapel Hill, 1939)

Bruner, Edward "Ethnography as Narrative" in Turner, Victor and Bruner, Edward (eds.) *The Anthropology of Experience* (University of Illinois, 1986)

Cassirer, Ernst *Language and Myth* (N.Y. 1946)

Chen, Ellen M. *The Tao Teh Ching: A New Translation with Commentary* (New York, 1989)

Cleary, Thomas (transl.) *The Book of Balance and Harmony* (San Francisco, 1989)

Clover, Carol "Skaldic Sensibility" *Arkiv for nordsk filologi* No. 93 (1978)

Csordas, Michael J. "The Rhetoric of Transformation in Ritual Healing" *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* vol. 7 (1983)

Eliade, Mircea (Willard R. Trask, transl.) *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton University Press, 1964)

Flaherty, Gloria "The Performing Artist as the Shaman of Higher Civilization" *MLN* vol. 103 no. 3 (April 1988)

Flaherty, Gloria *Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton University Press, 1992)

Foucault, Michel *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (N.Y. 1972)

Foucault, Michel *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other*

Writings (N.Y. 1980)

Freund, J. D. *The Civilized Body: Social Domination, Control, and Health* (Temple University Press, 1982)

Furst, Lilian R. (The Critical Idiom series, John D. Jump, ed.), *Romanticism* (London, 1969)

van Gennep, Arnold (Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle Cafee, transl.) *The Rites of Passage* (London, 1960)

Gergen, M. M. and Gergen, K. J. "The Social Construction of Narrative Accounts" in Gergen, M. M. and Gergen, K. J. (eds.), *Historical Social Psychology* (Hillsdale, 1984)

Glosecki, Stephen O. *Shamanism and Old English Poetry* (New York, 1989)

Grabowicz, George G. *Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature* (Cambridge, MA 1981)

Grabowicz, George G. *The Poet as Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Ševčenko* (Cambridge, MA 1982)

Grabowicz, George G. "Self-Definition and Decentering: Ševčenko's "Xiba samomu napysat'" and the Question of Writing," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. XIV No. 3-4. Dec. 1990

Greenberg, Jill "Sex, Lies, and Avatars" *Wired* (4.04, April 1996)

Greenfield, Sidney M. "Legacies From the Past and Transitions to a "Healed" Future in Brazilian Spiritist Therapy" *Anthropologica* XXXV (1993)

Hamilton, Edith and Cairns, Huntington *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* (Princeton, 1961)

Harner, Michael J. (ed.) *Hallucinogens and Shamanism* (Oxford University Press, 1981)

Harvey, Andrew *The Way of Passion: A Celebration of Rumi* (Berkeley, 1994)

Hutchison, George B. *The Ecstatic Whitman: Literary Shamanism and the Crisis of Union* (Ohio State University Press, 1986)

Iatsenko, M. T. (ed.) *Ukrains'ki poety-romantyky* (Kiev, 1987)

Ilnytzkyj, Oleh S. and Hawrysch, George *A Concordance to the Poetic Works of Taras Shevchenko* (University of Toronto Press, 1997)

Kohn, Livia *Early Chinese Mysticism: Philosophy and Soteriology in the Taoist Tradition* (Princeton University Press, 1992)

Kostenko, A. I. (compiler) *Poety poshevchenkivs'koi doby* (Kyiv, 1961)

Kirby, E. T. "The Shamanistic Origins of Theatre" *The Drama Review* vol. 18 (March, 1974)

Kirby, E. T. *Ur-Drama: The Origins of Theatre* (New York University Press, 1975)

Kirmayer, Lawrence J. "Improvisation and Authority in Illness Meaning" *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* vol. 18 (1994)

LaBarr, Weston *The Peyote Cult*, 5th edition (University of Oklahoma, 1989)

Lévi-Strauss, Claude *Structural Anthropology* (Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, transl.,) (New York 1963) Vol I

Levy, Mark *Technicians of Ecstasy: Shamanism and the Modern Artist* (Norfolk, CT 1993)

Lindheim, Ralph and Luckyj, George S. N. (eds.) *Towards an Intellectual History of Ukraine: An Anthology of Ukrainian Thought from 1710 to 1995* (University of Toronto Press, 1996)

Luckyj, George S. N. "Ševčenko and Blake," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* vol. 2 no.1 (1978)

Luckyj, George S. N. (ed.) *Shevchenko and the Critics* (Toronto, 1980)

Maspero, Henri *Taoism* (MIT Press, 1981)

Matthews, John *The Celtic Shaman: A Handbook* (Rockport MA, 1992)

McGuire, Meredith B. "Words of Power: Personal Empowerment and

Healing" *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* vol. 7 (1983)

Mijakovs'kyj, Volodymyr and Shevelov, George Y. (eds.) *Taras Ševčenko: 1814-1861* *A Symposium* (The Hague, 1962)

Myerhoff, Barbara G. "Shamanic Equilibrium: Balance and Mediation in Known and Unknown Worlds" in Wayland D. Hand, (ed.) *American Folk Medicine: A Symposium* (University of California Press, 1976)

Paper, Jordan *The Spirits are Drunk: Comparative Approaches to Chinese Religion* (SUNY, 1995)

Pisni Iavdokhy Zuikhy (Kyiv, 1965)

Pliushch, Leonid I. *Ekzod Tarasa Shevchenka: Navkolo "Moskalevoi krynytsi": Dvanadtsiat' stativ* (Edmonton, 1986)

Pliushch, Leonid I. "Shamanna poetyka T. H. Shevchenka" *Filosofs'ka i sotsiolohichna dumka*, No. 6 p. 130, and No. 7 p. 27, 1992

Rapinsky-Naxon, Michael *The Nature of Shamanism: Substance and Function of a Religious Metaphor* (SUNY, 1993)

Rimbaud, Arthur (Wallace Fowlie, transl.) *Complete Works, Selected Poems* (University of Chicago Press, 1967)

Scott, Walter *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* 3rd ed. (London, 1806)

Seaman, Gary *Journey to the North: An Ethnohistorical Analysis and Annotated Translation of the Chinese Folk Novel* Pei-yu-chi. (University of California Press, 1987)

Samuel, Geoffrey *Mind, Body, and Culture: Anthropology and the Biological Interface* (Cambridge University Press, 1990)

Samuel, Geoffrey *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington, 1993)

Shevchenko, Taras *Povne zibrannia tvoriv u dvanadtsiaty tomax* (Kyiv, 1989)

Spivey, Ted R. *Beyond Modernism: Towards a New Myth Criticism* (University Press of America, Lantham MD 1988)

Sverstiuk, Ievhen *Shevchenko i chas* (Kyiv, 1996)

Sweet, Robert Burdette *Writing Towards Wisdom: The Writer as Shaman* (Carmichael, CA 1990)

Teiser, Stephen F. "The Spirits of Chinese Religion" in *Religions of China in Practice* (Princeton University Press, 1997)

Thomas, Nicholas and Humphrey, Caroline (eds.) *Shamanism, History, and the State* (Ann Arbor, 1994)

Torrey, E. Fuller *Witchdoctors and Psychiatrists: The Common Roots of Psychotherapy and Its Future* (Northvale, N.J., 1986)

Turner, Victor *The Ritual Process* (Chicago, 1969)

Welch, Holmes *Taoism: The Parting of the Way* (Boston, 1965)

White, Michael and Epston, David *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (N.Y. 1990)

White, Michael and Epston, David *Experience, Contradiction, Narrative, & Imagination: Selected Papers of Michael White & David Epston 1989-1991* (Adelaide, 1992)

White, Michael *Re-Authoring Lives: Interviews and Essays* (Adelaide, 1995)

Wilson, Andrew *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith* (N. Y. 1997)

Wordsworth, William *Poetical Works* (Thomas Hutchison, ed.) (Oxford University Press, 1904)

Wu, John C. H. (transl.) *Tao Teh Ching* (N.Y. 1961)

Zabuzhko, Oksana "Demifolohizatsiia istorii" *Slovo i chas* (No. 3, 1990)